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WHEN BOYHOOD DREAMS COME TRUE

Further Short Stories

BY

JAMES T. FARRELL



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Published simultaneously in Canada by The Copp Clark Co., Ltd.

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SUN DIAL PRESS REPRINT EDITION, 1948, *by special arrangement with The Vanguard Press.*

All the characters in the stories and the three-act play contained in this volume are imaginary. If the names of any actual persons are used, this is sheer coincidence.

Formerly Published as
WHEN BOYHOOD DREAMS COME TRUE

MANUFACTURED IN THE U. S. A.

TO
ESTHER COWLES

" . . . the spirit of the time, growing slowly and quietly ripe for the new form it is to assume, disintegrates one fragment after another of the structure of its previous world. That it is tottering to its fall is indicated only by symptoms here and there. Frivolity and again ennui, which are spreading in the established order of things, the undefined foreboding of something unknown—all these betoken that there is something else approaching."

HEGEL

The Phenomenology of Mind

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The Power of Literature

SAMUEL LORD'S FIRST NOVEL was a vivid, powerful, and precisely detailed account of an alcoholic and of his eventual and complete regeneration. It described the dreams, the terrors, the agonies, the follies, the insatiable cravings for drink, and the sad and pathetic sordidness which is so characteristic a feature in the life of a dipsomaniac. His book became an immediate best seller; it was discussed widely in the press and on the radio; and full-page advertisements were taken by the publishers in the weekly and daily book pages. These advertisements contained quotations from some literary ex-drunks who spoke of the vividness, the truth, the reality, the power of the novel. One of them stated that the novel almost gave him delirium tremens. Another declared that, when he put it down, after staying up all night reading it, he had been left with such a vivid impression that he felt as if he had a hangover, and that he had gone about for two days feeling the terrors of shame and guilt that one feels when one does have a real hangover.

The book sold by the thousands and mounted up and up to the top of the best-seller lists; hundreds of thousands of copies of the book were bought from one end of America to another. It was wartime, and the book market was booming. The publishers had sold so many books that they were in the surtax brackets. They decided to spend some money, which was deductible from taxes, on a big party for Samuel Lord. It was to be the biggest literary party in years, and several members of the firm, as well as the employees, devoted much

WHEN BOYHOOD DREAMS COME TRUE

time to the arrangements. The planning of the party required editorial conferences, discussions, and consultations over a period of several weeks. Everything was planned with the greatest care. Four rooms in one of the swankiest hotels in New York were hired. Two bars were to be arranged, one of them to serve only the best champagne, and the other to serve all kinds of other alcoholic drinks. The idea of serving the guests free champagne was particularly attractive to the publishers. There was much discussion and much anticipation of this. It had never been done in the book business, and to do this, particularly when it was so difficult to get champagne, was a real feather in their caps. And during these many discussions about the serving of drinks, the arrangement of the bars, the purchase of the liquor, no one involved paused to think of the theme of the book.

Several hundred invitations were sent out to other publishers, to critics, writers, actors and actresses, people in the retail book trade, agents, literary politicians, radio broadcasters, ne'er-do-wells, editors, critics, reviewers, gossip columnists, and sundry others. The New York literary world had not had a party such as this was to be since the days of the boom, back in the dizzy twenties.

The day of the party arrived. All day, Sam Lord was excited and nervous. He had dreamed of writing for years, and now he was a famous writer. This was his day of triumph. Today his dreams would come true, objectively. The literary and celebrity world of New York would come to his party to pay him homage. He was nervous by temperament, and all day he was unable to do anything but fret at the slowness with which time seemed to pass. Eventually, he found himself outfitted in new and expensive clothes, in the lavish rooms, talking with his publishers and proudly holding a glass of ginger ale in his hand. His literary triumph, expressed publicly at this party, was merely symbolic of his own personal and inner triumph in having so overcome his own weakness for drink that he had even been able to write about it with pitiless objectivity. Waiting for the guests to arrive, with a certain modest and

justifiable pride, he thought of how he had overcome himself. At five o'clock only a few persons were present, and Sam was very nervous and unsure of himself. The party would be a failure. People would not come. It was a cold day in April; it had rained all day. At five o'clock a cold rain was pouring down on New York. The irony of the gods was being expressed. He felt humiliated.

However, his fears were due to overanxiety. Shortly after five, guests, invited and not invited, began pouring into the lavish rooms. A gray-haired man in tails stood at the entrance, pointing to the right and announcing that in that direction was the champagne bar and that in the other direction was the Scotch bar. Tables were spread out in the rooms. In the largest, there was a small stage on which there was a three-piece orchestra. As the guests poured in, Sam was bewildered. His heart began to flutter, and he almost cried at the sight of so many people coming to pay him homage because of his book. He thought of all the suffering that had gone into the writing of his novel, of the many times he had wanted to give up, of the days of gloom, of the agony of being alone with himself at his typewriter, slaving over it. And he thought of the terrible experiences on which his book was based. And now, this was all proven to have been worth while. And here was the proof of it. Rich people, famous men and women, the intellectual cream of New York, the intellectual capital of the world, were now streaming to a party in his honor, being introduced to him, shaking his hand, congratulating him, telling him he had written a great book. In a daze he shook hands, grinned, and thanked people.

By five-thirty, the party had become a milling jam. People still crushed in, milled, jammed the bars and talked endlessly in excited voices which rose to a roar. Sam's hand was tired; he had greeted so many people. His eyes were strained.

The rooms were curtained with cigarette smoke, and conversation rose to an even wilder pitch. And from time to time the orchestra played old-time songs, regularly rendering *Hail*,

Hail, the Gang's All Here. By six o'clock one could hardly move because of the crush.

Sam had stopped receiving and sat at a table. People kept coming and going. Again and again, the tears almost welled up in his eyes. Here he was, a small-town boy from Sunshine, Iowa, and all this magnificence—it was all in his honor. And it was paid to him because of his book. And his book was great. Yes, it had to be. It had not received one unfavorable review. It had been praised not only by the critics but by the leading writers of America, by psychiatrists and psychoanalysts and many others.

"Are you Samuel Lord?" a man asked, approaching him with a half-drunk glass of Scotch in his hands.

"Yes. I am."

"Glad to meet you. My name is Jones. You know, I envy you. Do you know what you did?"

"Why, no, what, Mr. Jones?"

"You've ruined my career as a writer."

Sam didn't know what to say.

"You wrote the book I always wanted to write. But it's a damned swell book. Congratulations."

"Why, thank you."

"Have a drink?"

"I'm sorry, but I don't drink."

"Oh, come on. Come on, have a drink."

Sam resisted. He was cured, and he would never touch another drop. But he didn't mind others drinking, he added to himself in reflection. He thrilled with pride in his own confident self-control.

Mr. Jones staggered through the noisy crowd.

"Lord," a drunk said, coming up to him and slapping him familiarly on the back.

"Yes."

"Glad to meet yuh. Glad to meet yuh. I haven't read your book, glad to meet yuh."

"I think you'd like it," Sam said, for Sam often had no modesty about his abilities as a writer and never felt the least

qualms in telling people that he was a great writer, or in asking that they read what he wrote.

"I'm sure I would. But do you know why I haven't read it?"

"No, but I hope you do."

"I'll tell you why. I haven't composed my spiritual attitude toward alcohol. No, Lord, haven't composed my spiritual attitude toward alcohol." He laughed at his own joke, and then he repeated it lustily, slapping Sam on the back. "That reminds me, I'll go and get a drink, see if it composes my spiritual attitude."

In no time, however, Sam had been forgotten as the guest of honor. As more new guests arrived, they didn't bother to meet him, and a number of them rushed to the bars, especially to the champagne bar.

The party turned into a noisy *mêlée*. People drank, ate fancy *hors d'oeuvres*, talked, shouted, and drank some more.

The supply of liquor was inexhaustible, and many of the guests were hesitant to go. The noise and din persisted, and by six-thirty many were staggering, while others were talking in thick voices and repeating themselves. Here and there quarrels broke out and harsh words were hurled back and forth. Drunks staggered around trying to paw girls, and a few drunken women floated back and forth in search of someone who might paw them.

Sam had a headache, but he stayed on. He became engaged in a serious discussion of literature with an attractive girl, and he was enjoying it when a drunk staggered up to him and said:

"Say, say, are you Lord?"

"Yes, I am."

"I wanted to ask you a question. Ask you a question. Yes, ask you a question."

"Yes, what is it?" Sam asked politely.

"Wanted to ask you a question. Swell book you wrote. Swell. Yes, swell book you wrote. Wanted to ask you a question. What was it? Oh, yes—say, Lord, answer me—am I the guy you wrote that book about?"

"Why, goodness no. I don't know you."

"I just wanted to know. I thought I was that guy. Because I'm like him. But I wanted to ask another question. Yes, wanted to ask you this? Why did you sober him up? That was a dirty trick. Why didn't you give him another drink?"

"Well, you see, it was because of artistic needs that I did it," Sam began.

Thinking of himself, thinking of how successful he had become, of how he had arrived as a writer, and seeing all these people here at a party in his honor, Sam had become enamored with himself as an artist, and he talked seriously even to the drunk.

"Sobering him up, that wasn't art. That was morals. And, Lord, morals is a dirty trick."

Lord was whisked away to meet someone else and, as he shoved his way through people, he heard a girl say:

"That's him."

He met more people. He was becoming concerned about how he should act. He had to act natural. Be simple, like a regular guy. He was flustered.

"Are you really Samuel Lord?" a dark-haired girl asked. Were it not for features and a nose a trifle sharp, she would have been very attractive.

"Yes," he said, grinning.

"Oh, I don't believe it."

"What?"

"I don't believe this could happen to me. I've only been in New York one week, and look at me, I'm at this party and I'm meeting you."

Once he had had feelings like this, although he had never expressed them as naively.

"Honest, you're not fooling me. You are Samuel Lord?"

"Why, yes, only I'm really not forbidding."

"Is he Samuel Lord?" she asked a man beside her.

"I guess so. Say, is your name Lord?" the man asked.

Sam grinned affirmatively, and the man turned to the girl and said:

"Yes, Babe, that's him."

At about seven-thirty the guests began thinning out, and only a few of the drunks remained. Lord found himself with a group at a table near the champagne bar.

"I have one weakness," a drunk boasted.

"What's that?"

"This."

"You should have read Lord's book then."

"I did. Say, it's so real. My God, it made me drunk just to read it."

"Lord, have a drink," someone said.

Lord wouldn't drink. He had been tempted several times, but he had not given in. He now feared drinking, and the sight of so many drunks had caused him to remember his own days of drinking. He winced.

"Say, do you know who I am?" a young man with a handsome face asked.

"Who are you?"

"I'm Edmund Smythe," he said.

"Who's that?"

"You don't know who I am?"

"No."

"I'm going to jump out of the window."

He rose and walked with determination to a window, opened it, and was getting ready to leap when he was dragged in by two strangers. He fought with them and screamed:

"Let me do it."

Five persons were needed to hold him, and then he passed out.

He was carried to a washroom to be sobered up.

Sam had been intending to leave for some time. But he stayed on, and now he again decided to go. As he got up, he was buttonholed.

"I'm just a drunken publicity man, Lord."

"Yes, I think I met you."

"Just a drunken publicity man. Wanted to be a writer. Just a drunk. I'm drunk, Lord."

"You're not so drunk."

"Just drunk, drunken publicity man. But I wanted to say—that book you wrote. That book you wrote . . ."

His thoughts seemed to be lost, and he stared past Lord glassy eyed.

"Now, that book you wrote. But, say, I'm not boring you, am I?"

"Why, no. Not at all."

"Now, that book you wrote."

Lord waited. Even though the man was drunk, he waited for the praise he expected.

"Now, that book you wrote."

The drunk couldn't think of anything else to say, and suddenly he staggered away to get another drink.

Sam was waylaid several times, but finally he escaped, leaving behind an odd assortment of drunks. His head throbbed. He walked away from the hotel, tired, wondering what to do. He was a success. He was the author of one of the most talked-of books in New York, in America. He was a famous person. Crowds hurried past him on the streets. Perhaps if it weren't dark and rainy, perhaps strangers might even recognize him, for his picture had been in the paper a number of times in the last few weeks. And he had won success the hardest way. How he had suffered! And now he had looked at all the drunks at the party and he had not relapsed. He thrilled with the conviction of self-mastery. But then this vanished in his loneliness.

He ate supper alone. He was rich now, but he pondered as to what he was going to do with himself and his success. He thought of the party, again reveling in the thought that it had been in his honor. Suddenly it occurred to him. He had written a book about drinking and nearly everyone at the party had seemed to be drunk. The irony struck him forcibly, but then he again thought of the honor it had been to him, and he was tolerant of the drunks he had seen. His mind whirled in recollection of praise that had been bestowed on him.

He took a cab home. Alone in his penthouse, he again wondered what he would do. He looked out of the window at the

rain, seeing New York as a mist, with lights shining through. It was a splendid view, and these lights seemed to beckon to life, to romance; they seemed to carry with their faint glare the meaning and the mystery of life. Far below, he heard the dimmed-down noises of traffic. He had succeeded in this New York over which he now looked from on high. And what was he going to do with it? And what of the people he had seen? So many of them drunk, as he had been so often. They were lonely. He had drunk, and he had been lonely and frustrated. And now he wasn't drunk, but he was still lonely. He missed a drink now, but he wouldn't take it.

He sat alone amid new things, new furniture, new books, new clothes. He had bought everything he could with his money. He had been honored by parties, interviewed, praised. And now, alone with himself, he felt dreary, and he began to worry that perhaps his book might not be great, and that perhaps he could not write another such novel. He gazed pensively at New York below him.

Willie Collins

I

THE NOON-HOUR CROWDS had the effect of shock upon Willie Collins, the new Chief Wagon Dispatcher in the Call Department. He had not been in the Loop at lunchtime in several years. The noise and people and combustion were a distraction, with slight variations, from the noise to which he was accustomed when dispatching wagons in a depot. He was nervous and a little disoriented, because the slight variation constituted something new in his experience.

He bought a nickel cigar and lit it.

He expressed his reaction to the crowd and noise by reiterating to himself:

—Geel

People passed by him in waves on the noisy streets. The sun spread over the horizontal brick piles and the sidewalks. The young girls, dressed in short skirts, walked and strolled about; they seemed to have little on underneath, and some of them wore rolled stockings, permitting occasional glimpses of their white thighs.

He gazed about him with eyes of wonder.

—Geel

The sights were all new, all right. There seemed to be more people and more buildings and more traffic than ever before.

He guessed that Chicago sure was growing, all right.

He hoped he would see one of his own express trucks. It would give him a thrilling pride of recognition.

—Gee!

The buildings were big. He looked at them. Forty years ago no one ever imagined they would build buildings as big as these. And, gee, in the future, the buildings would be even bigger.

He wished he were younger so he could live longer, because if he could live longer, he would see even bigger buildings. His kids would live to see bigger buildings than he ever would. But he was only thirty-three, and he had thirty, maybe forty, maybe fifty, years ahead of him—who could tell? Before he died he could see some pretty big buildings, all right. The buildings he would see in his own lifetime would be pretty big ones. But if only he had about seventy years ahead of him, he would see even bigger buildings.

If you had seventy years ahead and would be able to live in one of the buildings they would build then, imagine being up at the top of it and looking down to see the people walking along the street, just as he was walking now!

Why, gosh, they wouldn't even look as big as peanuts. They would look just like ants. And then, think how much smaller they would look if you were in an airplane.

Progress was a wonderful thing. Gosh, all that they had made since he was a kid! The airplanes and automobiles and battleships. And look at how the movies had been developed. Just think, the day was coming when poor people could have more and more of these wonderful things, bathrooms and automobiles and telephones. A lot of them did now. And he would be getting more of these things, too, before he died. Someday he would get himself a telephone. Only he didn't believe in putting on shine. He liked a clean house that was warm in the winter and some good substantial things, only he thought it was wiser to put some money in the bank every payday than to put it out in a little bit of extra shine.

He passed a corner at which a dark, husky-voiced kid bawled out the noon-hour editions of the newspapers. Now, that was another thing. The news of everything that was happening in the world for you to read on your lunch hour.

What was happening in Japan, and what the society people were doing in New York and London and Paris, and what was happening in all the countries, wars and revolutions, and what Churchill was saying about Lenin and Trotsky—gee, everything—and even what was happening in a country like Russia where there was anarchy.

—Gee!

He thought of buying a paper, but he decided not to. He bought a paper in the evening, and there was no use wasting money. There was more news in the paper in the evening anyway, because they had time to get more news and to tell you more fully what was going on in the world.

He watched the girls. There were certainly more women and girls in business than there used to be. They were good-looking, too. They had nice stuff, all right. But they weren't like the girls that used to be. All this modern jazz stuff. Yes, the girls were changing. Smoking cigarettes, and all that sort of thing. The young girls passed singly and in groups. He looked at them, and he got to wondering how many of them had ever had it. More than you would think, if you knew anything about life. He'd bet a lot of these girls passing him, who looked so sweet and innocent, had had it. Yes, and they probably liked it, too. Take these sweet and innocent ones. Once they got it, they were the ones that liked it best, and they could tire the living hell out of a man.

Every year the girls seemed to be sweeter looking. But, gee, if the dresses got any shorter, there wouldn't be anything left to them. He looked at them and liked them, but he looked slyly.

He came to a new building. Men were working on it, but now they were on their lunch hour. The building rose, up, up, up, up, a straight, swift, unadorned line of concrete. The windows were chalked. People stopped and gazed. So did Collins. Another new building. As he walked on, he thought that, gosh, yes, Progress was a wonderful thing. He looked at a pretty girl who bobbed past him. He thought, with pride of insight, that,

while Progress had changed a lot of things, they still did one thing in the same old way.

He thought about himself, too, and he was almost electrified with pride because he had once been nothing but a boy on a single wagon for the old Van Buren Express Company and now he was Patsy McLaughlin's Chief Dispatcher. He was going to become Patsy's ace and right-hand man.

He knew that Patsy would see that he had the goods and that he was a real expressman. Patsy was a first-rate expressman himself, and he knew an expressman when he saw one. That was why he had been made Chief Dispatcher.

He thought, too, about Gashouse McGinty, cursing that fat bastard. He thought of himself fighting that big bag. He thought of McGinty lumbering in front of him, and himself dancing around the lummoX like an artful dodger, hitting him, poking him, and artfully dodging out of the big muttonhead's range. He thought of himself punching McGinty's big fat face, punching it and punching it and punching it, cutting it all to hell. He thought of each punch as a deliberate cruelty. Each punch was like a stab, and Collins enjoyed the thought of it. He saw McGinty bloody and bloated and hurt, toppling, falling, crumbling to his knees and begging Collins to leave him be. And then he thought of himself kicking that fat face.

—That big, fat bastard, if he tries to get funny with me, that's what I'm going to give him, Collins told himself.

Yes, and he felt that that was what he would give others, too, if they got wise with him.

Wandering about the Loop, he drifted back to Van Buren Street and, as he was passing along, planning to stand in front of the office until his lunch hour was up, he noticed a crowd in a jewelry store. An auction was being held. He went inside out of mere curiosity and because he had nothing else to do. He stood in the back of the crowd and listened.

"The man says five . . . five . . . five . . . Once five . . . Are you done? Anybody bid seven? . . . Six? . . . Anybody say six? . . . Who'll say six? Say six! Who'll say? Five-seventy-five? . . . You? . . . You? . . . You? . . . Five-

fifty? Anybody say a quarter more? . . . A nickel more? . . . I can see there aren't any Lake Shore millionaires here . . . The man says five . . . Are you done? . . . Five? . . . Once . . . Are you done? . . . Once . . . Five . . . Five Twice . . . Are you done? . . . Twice . . . Who'll say five-fifty? . . . Are you bid? . . . Done? . . . Twice . . . Last call . . . Are you done? . . . Five? . . . Five? . . . Five . . . Sold!"

The man fumblingly opened the case of a watch. He leaned over the counter and exhibited the workings.

"Read that and tell them how many jewels in this Olympic? . . . Gentlemen, it's an Olympic, and this gentleman here will tell you how many jewels it contains."

The fellow read and muttered, embarrassed:

"Fourteen."

"You hear that?" the auctioneer asked, pointing to a sleepy-looking man near Willie.

Willie hoped the auctioneer wouldn't ask him anything. He was exceedingly suspicious of the auctioneer. Hell, it was a gyp business.

"Fourteen. All you gentlemen hear that? This watch I'm holding here in my hand is a fourteen-jewel Olympic. An *Olympic*. Now, gentlemen, how much am I bid on it? Who'll say ten?"

The audience gasped and waited.

"Who'll say five?"

Willie looked around.

—Jesus, this is a cheap outfit! he told himself.

"Say, any one of you gentlemen could take this watch to a pawnshop and get fifteen dollars for it just like that. What's the matter with you? You, there, what's the matter? Don't you think this fourteen-jewel Olympic is worth five dollars?"

He pointed to a long-faced, conservatively dressed man on the right of the crowd.

"I got a watch."

"You got a watch? Well, haven't you no gambler's instinct?"

Take the watch. Sell it to your best friend. Take it to a pawnshop and hock it."

Willie stuck a cigar in his mouth and lit it. He looked around at the crowd; there were about thirty people in the store.

The auctioneer was a sleek-looking, fattish-faced, Jewish man with graying hair, who wore a big diamond ring on his left hand. He held a fat, gold watch, its case elaborately engraved.

"See this?"

He leaned over the counter and asked a dumb-faced gawker up front to tell him what kind of make the watch was.

The fellow looked at the watch and then at the auctioneer. He smiled insipidly.

"Olympic," he read hesitantly.

"Anybody ever hear of an Olympic? Sure you did. Why, if you mentioned Olympic to the Hottentots, they'd know what you meant. An Olympic watch is nationally advertised. And, ladies and gentlemen, this watch is an Olympic. It's an Olympic. Do you understand that, gentlemen? An Olympic, and you ought to know how much this watch would cost you if you went into an ordinary jeweler's. Fifty dollars. Fifty dollars! Now, I'm going to put this watch on the block because I know that there are some gentlemen in this audience who appreciate a good bargain and a dandy watch when they see one. Two days ago in this place I sold a watch like this for twenty-seven dollars. Now, who'll give me an opening bid of ten dollars? . . . What, no one? There's no one in this audience who'll pay ten dollars for an Olympic? Why, gentlemen, how far do you think a five-dollar gold piece would go to make up the gold in this case? And here, to show you that I'm playing on the level with you here . . . here . . . for fifteen dollars. For the sake of Moses, man, if you'd sell me your B.V.D.'s for twenty cents and I could make a nickel on my investment, I'd buy them. That's the secret of success. Don't be chumps. Hell, don't work for somebody else. You work for somebody else and you'll end up with your back bent, sleeping

out on a park bench or in the poorhouse. Work for yourself! Invest a little money, take a chance, and get a quick turnover. Gamble! You'll never get anywhere in this life if you won't take a little gamble now and then. Wake up, man, this is the twentieth century."

Willie thought about what the auctioneer had said, but he was a little suspicious.

"Who'll bid me five?"

Willie went into deep thought. He compressed his lips and nodded his head slightly. There must be something crooked someplace.

He wondered if he could bid half a buck.

"Well, who'll bid me anything, a dollar, anything to start it off?"

The auctioneer scrutinized the faces before him. Then he stared squarely at Willie.

"How much is this watch worth to you?"

"I'll bid fifty cents," Willie said, smiling.

"Thank you," the auctioneer said sarcastically.

Willie grinned as some people gaped at him.

"The gentleman here bids fifty cents. He's very generous. In fact, I think he's a Lake Shore Drive millionaire. Fifty cents! Fifty cents. Fifty cents. I'm bid fifty cents on this fourteen-jewel Olympic that you couldn't get for less than fifty dollars if you tried to buy it at Peacock's. Fifty cents. Anybody here think they would like to bid fifty-one cents for this fifty-dollar Olympic watch? Anybody else bid? If I get a second bid, it's out of my hands and I got to sell it. Who'll bid anything else? Who'll bid a dollar? It's the last Olympic watch you gentlemen are going to get, because I won't sell another. Who'll raise the bid?"

Willie thought it would be swell to get the watch cheap, and then he could hock it and never return to redeem it. He'd make a quick profit, and maybe he could pull the same stunt at other auctions. It would be a good side line.

"Who'll bid a dollar?"

A hand went up.

"The gentleman here bids a dollar. Don't you gentlemen spend too much money for a fourteen-jewel, solid-gold, Olympic watch. How far do you think a five-dollar gold piece would go to make up this solid-gold case? Say, you could buy this for more than a dollar, have the gold melted, and still make a profit."

Willie speculated. Should he raise the bid a quarter? These cheap bastards here wouldn't spend anything, he could see that, and he might get the watch cheap enough, all right. He tried to make up his mind.

"Who'll bid three dollars?"

"Two," a voice called out.

"The gentleman here bids two."

Willie decided he wouldn't go any higher. He looked at the watch. He thought of the profit he might make. But he was suspicious. These auctioneers. He was suspicious.

"Who'll bid three? Three? Three? Nobody here bids three? Is there anybody in the crowd that's got three dollars? Who'll bid three dollars on this fourteen-jewel, solid-gold Olympic watch? A guarantee goes with it, too. Who'll bid three? . . . I never saw a crowd like this and I've been conducting auctions for years, my friends."

Was he letting some easy money go? He eyed the auctioneer with increased suspicion. He wanted to see if he could find anyone in the crowd who looked like a real honest businessman. If he could spot somebody bidding who seemed really like a businessman, he would not be as suspicious.

"I'm bid three-fifty. Anybody bid four? . . . Four? . . . Four? . . . FOUR?"

Willie determined that he wouldn't buy it. He wouldn't be rimmed, no, sir, not him, because he wasn't the kind of a chump who allowed himself to be chumped by a cheap kike auctioneer.

The auctioneer shook his head.

"Who'll bid five?"

A number of defensive, apologetic smiles showed on the faces of the crowd.

"Say, would anybody give me five dollars for the building?"
More apologetic smiles.

"I'll go four-fifty on the watch," a man called out.

"The gentleman here offers four-fifty on this fourteen-jewel Olympic watch . . . Four-fifty . . . Who'll say five? . . . Who'll say five? . . . Five? . . . Five?"

Willie felt impelled to demonstrate that he was something more than a piker like the others here. He shouldn't be considered in the same class with this bunch. He was different. Perhaps the auctioneer realized this, too. If he didn't, he ought to. And he wondered about the watch? Five dollars down to make a ten-dollar profit. It didn't seem to be such a bad investment. No, he guessed he'd better not do it. Let the other guy be the sucker.

"The gentleman says six . . . I'm bid six . . . Six . . . Six . . . Six on this fourteen-jewel Olympic watch . . . How far do one of you gentlemen think a five-dollar gold piece would go to make up that solid-gold case? . . . Six . . . Who'll say eight? I'm bid six, who'll say eight?"

The crowd gaped and listened.

"Anybody here got eight dollars?"

—Why, that bastard! thought Willie.

Anybody got eight dollars, huh? He'd like to show him that he had twenty bucks in his kitty. Yes sir, twenty bucks, and all in singles. All he would have to do would be to draw out the wallet and let the fellow see how thick it was with this roll, and then the fellow wouldn't have to ask if anybody here had eight dollars. . . .

"Seven . . . I'm bid seven . . . Seven . . . Seven!"

Not listening, Willie looked at the watch, and he was torn not only by the desire to buy it and make the suggested profit at a hock shop but also by the counterdesire of buying and owning it. He had a good watch, but this might really be a better one. A man with his job and authority ought to have a good watch. He saw himself flashing it at work. Then, take a guy like Mike Mulrooney, with his diamond stickpin. He, Willie

Collins, wouldn't have to hold up a candle to that big loud-mouth, Mike Mulrooney. Or take at church on Sunday when he was ushering. He'd be able to pull out this watch to find out the time, and the parishioners would notice the expensive and beautiful watch Mr. Collins had. Or take at a meeting of the Order of Christopher, or the Foresters, or the Holy Name Society.

He could take it out and look at the time, and they'd all see the shining gold case and eye him, green with envy. It was a distinctive-looking watch, one to go with his personality.

"Eight . . . I'm bid eight . . . Eight . . . Who'll say nine? . . . Nine . . . Nine? . . . Nine? . . . I say nine . . . Who'll say nine? . . . Are you done? . . . Eight? . . . Eight . . . Are you done? . . . I sold one of these here identical watches to a dealer for twenty dollars, do you hear that, gentlemen, twenty dollars? I sold it to a dealer, only yesterday . . . I'm bid eight . . . Eight . . . Eight . . . Anybody say nine? . . . Nine? . . . The watch is cheap even at thirty dollars . . . Who'll say nine? . . . Nine?"

Willie again looked at the watch, wondering. He pondered. Again he was suddenly seized with the desire to own the watch. He thought of the profit he might make on it. He could buy it, pawn it for fifteen, or perhaps twenty dollars, and that way earn the price of the watch . . .

"Gentleman bids nine . . . Nine . . . Nine . . . Who'll say ten?"

Willie looked. No, it might be all bunk, and he might get gypped. Nobody was putting nothing over on him. No, sir, he was not going to have any wool pulled over his eyes . . . But he looked at the watch . . . He knew he wanted it. But he shouldn't spend the money. But it wouldn't be spending the money. He would invest it, just like the guy said, and make some dough, and he could come back again and do it and soon have enough money to buy himself a watch just like that one, and out of pure profits. Goddamn it, it wasn't such a bad idea.

Perspiring, wondering, and breathless, Willie weakly bid, "Ten . . ."

After paying, Willie walked out of the store with his Olympic watch and a guarantee for its fitness and longevity in his pocket. He had twenty minutes left. . . . He would go to a pawnshop and make his dough and buy himself one of the watches that way.

He was smart, even though he did admit it to himself.

II

Goddamn that dirty louse. He felt like going back and smashing his goddamn face. He ought to report the fellow to the police. A guy like that ought to get sent up for life. Maybe it was only the pawnshop guy trying to gyp him down; but, no, he had been to three hock shops. That dirty Jew auctioneer.

Riding home in the crowded streetcar, standing on tiptoe to cling to a strap because he was so small, Willie was really angry.

And what would he tell the wife? He determined he wouldn't tell her everything. He was his own boss, and if he wanted to buy a watch, that was his business. If she raised hell, he'd let her know who ran his home. He wouldn't apologize to her. He didn't have to. A man was the boss of his own household. Of course, she'd see the watch sooner or later. That dirty Jew auctioneer. And he would have to tell her something. And then, even if a man was the boss of his own household, a woman had a tongue. . . . Well, goddamn it, he was going to show his authority.

A man squeezed up from a seat. Willie flopped into it instantly. Luck, and he was tired. He didn't see why he shouldn't keep his seat. He was tired from a hard day's work, and some of these women, they didn't do any work. Why should a man, after a hard day's work, sacrifice his seat? The janes did nothing but jabber and powder and run to the can every few minutes, so why shouldn't a man who did a hard day's work keep his seat in the car if he got there first? No, sir, he wouldn't give up his seat. He didn't see why he had to.

He sat and consoled himself for feeling tired. He put his

hand in his pocket and felt the case in which he had the new watch. That goddamn rat! The car jerked and rocked.

He thought about telling his wife. Well, it was a lesson, and one always had to learn one's lessons. Everybody in the world was always trying to put something over on you. If you amounted to anything, it was then that they tried the most to put it over on you. They were jealous of you. That was the way it was at the Express Company.

They all made his job twice as hard because they were jealous of him and wanted to put it over on him. McGinty was jealous of him because he was the Chief, and Mac envied him for his title of Chief Dispatcher. All the Route Inspectors were jealous of him for the same reason. Everybody was against him. Well, let them. He was no easy mark, and if they wanted to pull the wool over his eyes, they had to get up goddamn early in the morning.

The car rocked and jerked along.

Those punk clerks, too. They were always trying to get away with something on him, all of them but Casey. Gerald was all right. He wished he had an office full of clerks like Casey. But the rest of them weren't worth half their salary.

That new clerk, O'Reilly, was dumb. But then, his uncle was a big lawyer, a man in politics, a friend and relative of Patsy McLaughlin. If O'Reilly had such an uncle, he must have some stuff in him. He hoped sometime to meet O'Reilly's uncle at an Order of Christopher banquet or affair.

The car rocked along.

Yes, he'd like to meet O'Reilly's uncle. That was the kind of man to be associating with, not McGinty and these loogins from the express company.

Low-class bastards like McGinty put the name Irish in disgrace. There ought to be two names. A name like Irish for low bastards like McGinty, and a name like, say, Hibernians or something with tone, for men like himself.

They could all think they were putting something over on him if they wanted to, but someday, when it was necessary for him to show them that he was fully awake every minute of the

day, and that he had been wise to them all along and that they had never put anything over on him, he would, and he wouldn't make any mistakes about the way he showed them.

His hand found the watch case in his pocket, and the car rocketed along.

That dirty kike. Pulling a stunt like that! He ought to turn him over to the police or go back and bust him in the nose.

Well, if his wife started nagging, he would tell her to shut up and talk when she was talked to.

Willie lived in a wooden frame house in Cicero, which rented for twelve dollars a month. After leaving the car, he walked down his street like God, and when he entered his home and said hello to his huge wife, he complained of what a hard day he had had. His two kids said hello to him, and he greeted them gruffly.

After supper, his ten-year-old boy, Thomas, asked if he would give him some help with his arithmetic lesson. But Willie was afraid of fractions, so he told his son that the only way to learn was to puzzle out things for yourself.

He showed the watch case to his wife and said:

"Look at the present I got from a jewelry outfit for giving them good service."

She thought it was a beautiful present.

Then he carefully shaved, put on a clean broadcloth shirt, shined his shoes, brushed his suit, dallied five minutes over the ceremony of putting on his hat, and went out to a meeting of the Holy Name Society. After walking a block, he happened to take out his watch to see what time it was. He returned to his house and attached his new watch to his chain and wore it.

He sallied forth to the meeting.

III

There were about thirty men at the meeting, and they naturally and unconsciously divided up into two groups. Eight

men and Mr. Collins sat on the left-hand side of the small hall, and twenty-one, most of them with foreign faces, many of them in workmen's clothes, sat on the right-hand side. They mumbled in English and other languages before the meeting, and now and then one of them glanced over at the well-dressed men on the other side. Willie sat talking to Eddie Chance, the fellow who ran an inn and was supposed to be in with the officials of the township. He was something of a political power.

"What's the meeting for?" Eddie asked.

"Well, I might as well tell you, Mr. Chance. It's to raise money for a new parish house for Father Pollisek," Willie answered.

Chance slapped his knee and said:

"Say, that's a smart idea. You know, often when I been coming to church with my wife I would say to her: 'Helen, you know, Father Pollisek should have a new house to live in, and there's a number of us fellows in the parish who could give it to him.' Say, you can count me in on it."

"I think so. We ought to do it. You know, after all, this is our parish, you know, and we all ought to take an interest in our parish. That's the way I feel, and that's why I'm here tonight. You know," said Willie.

Willie pulled out his Olympic watch and noticed the time, holding it up so that it might be seen by all in the hall.

"Say, that's a good-looking timepiece," Chance said.

"It's an Olympic. Fourteen jewels. Set me back fifty bucks, but it's worth it. You know, no use getting things cheap," said Willie.

"Yeah," said Eddie Chance, pulling out his two-hundred-dollar watch and showing it to Willie.

Willie was envious. Well, someday. He observed Chance's suit. It must have cost plenty. Well, he was well dressed himself. He was the best-dressed dispatcher in the Supervision at the Express Company. He was not a dude, he was just a well-dressed businessman.

Willie rose, opened the meeting.

"Gentlemen, you know, we all came here to consider a thing that's important to us all. This is our parish, and we are all members of it, and we should all be proud of it. We should all take a part in the life of the parish. Gentlemen, you know, this is our parish, and it's our duty to, you know, see that it looks well. Now, the purpose of the meeting tonight is to consider plans to have a new parish house for Father Pollisek. You know, gentlemen, it's our parish, and it's up to us all to work together, you know, to see that this parish is the best that can be. It's only right for us all to come here and consider this matter, you know, and see that Father Pollisek will have a new house that none of us need be ashamed of."

Willie sat down proudly. Father Pollisek, a fat, Slavic priest, told them, with an occasional "de" for a "the," that they had been called to consider plans for getting a new parish house, and that it was the duty of every man of the parish to contribute and work so that the new parish house would be built.

Eddie Chance rose and said:

"I'll guarantee to contribute five hundred dollars to the fund."

They looked at him with awe. There was sudden applause.

Father Pollisek told Eddie Chance that the Lord would bless him.

Willie felt like a piker. He had intended to give five bucks. Well, he was giving his time to the church the whole year through. That was something. People might not think of it that way because it looked better to stand up and give five hundred dollars outright. But if his time was figured, it would be more than five hundred in dollars.

Mr. Jablonski, who ran a drugstore, promised fifty dollars.

Willie looked at him. That was fine. But envy came strongly to Willie's consciousness. A Polack having that much money to give in a white man's country.

One thousand and eighteen dollars in all was promised. A committee was appointed with Eddie Chance as chairman and the highest contributor, and with Willie as secretary.

"There won't be a minister in Cicero with a house to equal it," Chance said to Collins outside after the meeting.

"It'll be a good house, and we'll have to put it over. At our next meeting we'll have to figure out a plan to put this raffle and entertainment over to raise funds, and maybe the women of the parish could give a supper, you know," said Willie.

"Say, that's an idea."

Willie was very proud.

"Listen, I'll drop you off home in my car," Eddie Chance said.

Willie settled back in the soft seat of the Packard, and Chance gave Willie's address to the chauffeur.

This was something the other bastards at the Company didn't get. They didn't get to associate with fine fellows as rich and as generous and as democratic as Eddie Chance. When he told them, he'd knock them green with envy.

"You and the missus come and see me at my inn some night. You come as my guest," said Eddie Chance.

"We'll be glad to, thank you," said Willie.

"What was it that you do?" asked Eddie.

"I'm an expressman. I'm Chief Dispatcher, that is, I'm in charge of the wagon service for the Continental. You see all these gas-cars of the Company around picking up freight? Well, I'm in charge of all of them."

"Must be a lot of responsibility to that job. It sounds like a pretty good one."

"Yes, it is, but there is a lot of responsibility. You know," Willie said.

"Have a cigar," said Eddie, offering Willie a fifty-cent cigar.

"Thanks," said Willie, taking it, biting off the end, and trying to light it with an air of magnificent ease.

"Here's my place," said Willie.

"Well, so long, Collins," Eddie Chance said.

"Good night, Mr. Chance, and thanks," Willie said, getting out of the car.

Wait till he told Florence about this! And wait till he told them at work.

IV

"We're going to build the best parish house in Cicero for Father Pollisek," Willie yelled over at McGinty while the clerks were answering the phones.

"What the hell do I care?" McGinty replied.

"You wouldn't, you goddamn . . ."

Willie thought himself breathless trying to think of an appropriate name for McGinty.

"What the hell do you mean—we?"

"Sure, Mac, he's going to lay the bricks," said Frankie Noonan, who was working on the tractor board with Mac.

"Him lay bricks? He's a Chief Dispatcher, he wouldn't soil his lily-white hands with anything like that," Mac said to Noonan.

"I said *we* and I mean *we*, you Gashouse. We, the parish, the committee," shouted Willie.

"He thought you would lay the bricks, Mac," Casey said.

"Him, we wouldn't let a guy like him even touch the crapper," said Willie.

"I suppose you're the chairman of the committee?" asked Mac.

"Eddie Chance is. He gave five hundred bucks. Five hundred cold-iron smackers. Get that? Listen, five hundred smackers. Now, lump that."

"You didn't. What the hell do I care what he gave?" said Mac.

"No, you'd be too goddamn cheap to do it," said Collins. "He's my friend," he bragged.

"Tell me another," said Mac.

"Yeah, well, I rode home in his car last night. I'd like to see you ridin' home in his Packard, you big lump."

"Sure, he'd be your friend. He got his money runnin' whore houses. Nice friends you've got."

"He's the chairman of our committee and an honorable member of the parish. That's more than you are," said Collins.

"Yeah, an honorable whoremaster," said Mac.

"You know what he is, Casey. He's McGinty Irish, the lowest Irish on the map," said Collins.

"I don't ride home with whoremasters," Mac said, turning suddenly and then plugging on his board to answer a call.

"You know, Casey, this Eddie Chance is at church every Sunday. I take up the collection, and he never puts in less than a buck. Then this cheap bastard who's too tight to buy himself his own coffee but has to scrouge it and who always steals cigars at wakes is talkin'. That piker!"

There was a flurry of calls, and everybody was busy at the telephones in the noisy office. Then, during a lull, Willie pulled out his watch and checked it against the office clock on his right. It had lost eight minutes already this morning.

"Where did you get that?" Casey asked, noticing the watch.

"Bought it, my boy. Fifty bucks. That's an Olympic. Best watch on the market," Willie bragged, detaching it from his chain and handing it over.

"I'll bet Chance gave you that," said Mac, noticing the watch.

"Yeah, well, let me tell you that's a fifty-buck Olympic. You couldn't have one. You'd be too cheap to buy a good watch," said Willie.

"Not a sucker Olympic," said Mac.

"He's too dumb to appreciate quality," Willie said.

Willie bent over a stack of calls that he had to make. McGinty rose, tiptoed over behind Willie, and goosed him. Willie jumped out of his chair and yelled:

"Ouch."

McGinty stood laughing at him.

"Get out of here, Flannelmouth," Willie shouted, running around to the back edge of the table.

McGinty shrugged his shoulders and walked back to his place.

Willie glared at Mac but said nothing. He bent over his calls.

Then little Willie sat like a king on his chair at his end of the

call board, giving out orders for his chauffeurs to follow, watching the clerks to see to it that they answered the telephone calls quickly.

He fingered the watch in his watch pocket.

He'd never be played for a sucker like this again. That god-damn crook, taking him in. Well, it was good no one here knew about it.

He sat thinking of himself, and the office became noisier and noisier.

Two Brothers

I

"STUDYING?" Art McGoorty asked contemptuously as he entered the small, shabby room which served as both living and dining room in the McGoorty apartment.

"Yes," Eddie answered defensively, looking up from his book.

Art was eighteen, and husky. Eddie, a year younger, was taller, but pale, sallow, more callow in appearance.

"Well, it keeps you out of mischief. But, then, that's no problem for you. The catch would be if you got into any mischief."

"You're always making cracks at me," Eddie protested.

"If the shoes don't fit, step out of them. Toss 'em away," Art said.

"Oh, go to hell!"

"Now," Art said sarcastically, "is that a nice thing to say to your brother?" He approached the round table and pointed an index finger almost under Eddie's nose. "What would Mrs. Katz next door say if she heard such talk from one brother to another?"

"What did I ever do to you?" Eddie asked in defense, and in an injured tone of voice.

"You don't have to. You just are," Art snapped.

He swaggered around the table, drew out a package of cigarettes, lit one, approached Eddie, and blew smoke at him.

"How does it feel to be a creeping Jesus?" Art asked.

Eddie unconsciously bowed his head at the utterance of the word "Jesus."

"I mind my own business. I don't bother you," Eddie said, looking back at his book.

"You don't have to stick your tongue in my business. All you have to do to get dirt in my ears is to mind your own damned business," Art said angrily. "Everybody compares me with you, and that's been going on for too damned many years. It gives me a terrific pain, right here," he added, pointing at his plump buttocks.

"I can't help it if you're sore because I get better marks than you do."

"Oh, rats! Do me a favor. Go soak your head, pull the chain, and be sure you drown," Art said, turning from his brother and flopping into a chair.

"You make me sick," Eddie said.

Art fixed his brother with gleaming eyes and said:

"Will you guarantee that? I'd like to make you a little bit sicker than I do. I'm just fed up, fed up with you being so damned good."

"Cut it out," Eddie shouted, leaping to his feet.

"Now, is that nice, Cain, to slay your brother Abel? Lead us not into temptation, but forgive us our sins," Art said in parroting sarcasm, calmly looking up at his brother.

"I can't understand you," Eddie said weakly, turning away.

"Is there anything you understand, maybe, except perhaps the gerund of the irregular verb 'to be'?" asked Art with a sneer.

"Sometimes when you talk that way, I merely feel sorry for you," Eddie said in weak sarcasm.

"Save the tears, put them in the bank, and collect compound interest for yourself in Purgatory," Art retorted.

Art went into the bathroom off the dining room, tossed his butt away, and pulled the chain. He came back to the dining room, sat down by the table, and sighed audibly.

"Honest, Art," Eddie said, sincerely and persuasively, "I

don't see why we should fight and scrap so much. After all, we're brothers, and with Pa dead, and the way Mother works and feels, why, we ought to try and pull oars together and make a home for her, and make something out of ourselves."

"Sure, sure, only, Eddie, remember this," Art answered, his manner becoming calm, almost friendly. "Only remember, I don't go for the same things you go for."

"But we both could have more consideration for Mother."

"And she could for me, too. She's always treated me like a stepson."

"But," Eddie said, surprised, "she's your mother. She thinks only of your own good."

"And so, for my own good, she scraps with me last night because I went to a dance?"

"She was worried. And Mother is older than we are, and she's lived long enough to know some of the pitfalls we might fall into. And she's our Mother."

"You swallow that, without getting a bellyache?" Art answered, getting up again.

"She'd give anything for us," Eddie continued.

"Yeh, all she cares about me is that I do nothing to disgrace her sainted son Edward." He paused. "When are you going to be canonized?"

"That's not true. She wants you to get a good education and be a successful lawyer," Eddie said, wincing.

"And before I become anything else, I want to be human and natural," Art said, dropping onto the couch by the wall and taking a relaxed position.

"Because we're poor, she's afraid you might waste time and money on girls, that's all."

"No, she's worried about what Mrs. Katz and the neighbors think, and she can't understand that I'm not a kid any more."

"She doesn't want us to waste our time. It isn't so easy for her to send us to Mary Our Mother and meet the tuition bill."

"I could have saved that if she didn't kick like hell when I said I wanted to go to Park High. She raised hell because I wanted to go free to a public school."

He got up and walked back and forth between the table and the door.

"How can you talk like that?" Eddie asked, shocked. "They don't teach any religion at all there."

"That's why public schools are cheaper to go to than Catholic ones," Art said.

Eddie looked at his brother, shocked; Art returned an amused glance.

"Listen, Saint, the lads at our school go for girls and lose their cherries the same way that they do any place else," Art said sadistically, watching his brother's face again register feelings of shock and horror.

"That isn't because of the school or the teachers," Eddie said piously. "It's because of the weakness of mortal flesh. The priests at school have given up their whole lives to teach us, teach us what's right. That isn't so in public schools. The teachers do it for money."

"I wish some of them like Father Dennis would teach himself the difference between his can and a hole in the ground," Art said contemptuously.

"Why, how can you say such things? You're liable to be punished by God on the spot if you talk that way!"

"Say, tie a can to the Bughouse Fables. Dennis is just a hick."

"I'm ashamed, ashamed of my own brother," Eddie said.

Art answered with a gesture of contempt.

"God won't take that gesture of yours for an answer. Someday you'll regret saying what you say."

"And then I'll pay the piper, and so, I ask—what the hell?"

Art paraded around the room jauntily, his hands in his pockets. Then he got out a book.

They sat down at the table and pored over their books. Eddie became very ill at ease.

"Oh, heck," he suddenly said. "Heck, I sometimes get all mixed up."

"Well, don't say an Act of Contrition. Everybody is more or less mixed up anyway."

"Oh, you and I are just different," Eddie said.

"Listen, Kid, tell me, is something biting you?" Art asked, now sympathetic.

"Tell me, Art, honestly—is there anything the matter with me?"

Art looked at his brother, bewildered.

"Am I different from others?"

"Well, you don't go for girls and the rough stuff. But then, you have a vocation. I guess you were just made from a different pattern than I was."

"Nobody knows what I'm like," Eddie lamented. "Everybody just assumes I'm different." He blushed. "How do you know I don't like girls?"

"Well, listen, don't floor me by saying you've got some little hooker on the string. My heart might not stand it."

"I don't know what I want," Eddie exclaimed, rising, walking around the table, nervously sticking his hands in his pockets but drawing them out again immediately. Then he suddenly but self-consciously blurted out, "Art, do you know what it's like?"

"What's what like? Being a saint? What do you mean?" Art asked in reply, puzzled as he watched his nervously pacing brother.

"I mean," Eddie said, stopping, sticking his hands in his pockets again, standing awkwardly, blushing. "I mean—have you ever committed adultery?"

"Yes," Art answered casually.

"Aren't you afraid?"

"No."

"When did you do it? How did you find a girl?"

"Oh, that's easy. Girls want it as much as we do, that is, lads like me."

"Nothing happened to you? God didn't punish you?"

"Kid, I'll tell you a little secret. God doesn't really have much goddamned interest in me."

"He does," Eddie said seriously. "He is interested in the salvation of your soul, of the soul of every mortal man and woman."

"You get a hundred in Christian Doctrine. Anyway, if God loves me, I wish He'd fix it so I didn't have to work in a drug-store every afternoon after school."

"Art, aren't you afraid to talk like that?"

"You see me and hear me, don't you?"

Eddie stared unbelievably at his brother. Art was casual, but suddenly he beamed.

"When you did it," Eddie began, again flustered, "when you did it . . ."

He didn't seem to know how to go on.

"Listen, I've had me a nice twenty-four-year-old married woman on the string for a couple of months."

"Tell me about her. How did it happen?" Eddie asked with uncontrolled eagerness and curiosity.

"I was delivering an order," Art said, waxing enthusiastic. "When I rang the bell, she opens the door in a kimono. It was wide open. I saw the promised land, but she didn't seem to care. She asks me to come in while she gets the dough. So I go in, and she leads me to the bedroom and then she stands looking at me and not bothering to close the kimono. Well, I'm not bashful. I look at her. She comes near me and asks me if I like the way she looks, and puts her arms around me, and I didn't have to do a thing—and before I knew it she had my cherry. And I didn't mind nothing. Now, she orders from the drugstore a lot and has me coming up whenever I can. She told me all about her husband. He's a cold fish. She tells me I'm not a cold fish."

Eddie was blushing, and he seemed to have been offended by this story. But he looked at his brother with intent eyes. He asked:

"Suppose the husband catches you?"

"No chance. He works all day."

"Art—what's *it* like?" Eddie asked guiltily; he was perspiring.

"Sweet! Sweet! That's what I say. So sweet you got to do it and find out for yourself."

"But your conscience—doesn't it trouble you over committing a mortal sin?"

"It's just as the dame says to me—it's only natural, isn't it?"

"I don't know," Eddie said.

"Tell me, Kid, didn't you ever wonder what it's like?" Art asked.

"How'll I find out?"

"Get a dame."

"Where?"

"That's one thing," Art said knowingly, "one thing this man's world is full of. And if you can't pick one up, then get a job in a drugstore. Maybe you'll find a dame like I did."

"Would a girl really let me?"

"How do I know?" Art answered with a shrug of his shoulders. "You got to work it out right for yourself and the dame you find."

"Excuse me," Eddie suddenly said, his voice intense, his face set, rigid. He rushed into the bathroom. Art sat looking at the closed door.

II

"Hello, Arthur. Where's my boy Edward?" their mother asked, entering the room.

She was slightly corpulent, and her face was plain. She wore a shapeless black coat and had an armful of bundles. She went to the kitchen and set them down. Art looked at the closed bathroom door. She returned, her black dress as shapeless as her coat. Her hair was graying. There was a set and fanatic expression on her face and in her brown eyes.

"Where's Edward?" she asked again.

He looked at the bathroom door, nodded his head, and then he glanced off, so as not to look his mother in the eye.

"Did you boys have your supper?" she asked.

"Uh huh. I scrambled some eggs for both of us."

"I do wish I could be home more with my sons, to give them the care of a mother. My Edward needs proper meals."

"Don't worry, Mother," Art said. "There's a silver lining in every dark cloud."

"Boy, half of the time I don't know what you mean when you talk," she said with a puzzled expression on her face.

"Oh, Mom, don't mind me. I'm only the stepson anyway."

"It's queer words you be using, and I'm not the one to be understanding them."

"How was it, working today, Mom?" he asked.

"Oh, the lady entertained. She had a tea party," the mother said respectfully, "a tea party for some of the Women's Auxiliary of the Order of Christopher, and I tell you—they were such swell ladies."

"A hen party," he said. "Yeh, a hen party, huh, Mom? All for the ladies with some jack in their husband's pocketbook."

She gazed at him, hurt and annoyed, and she said in a reproving tone of voice:

"Arthur, I do wish you would keep that tongue of yours in your cheek. And if you don't, I tell you, as your mother, the day will come when you'll be rueing the day you didn't heed my warning. Mrs. Mulcahy is a lady, a lady, and if it were not for her I wouldn't be working today, earning the bread for our hungry mouths and the wherewithal to make a son a priest for the glory of all of us."

"It seems to me that if Uncle Mike helped us out a little more, he wouldn't break his right arm, and then I wouldn't be jerking sodas and you wouldn't have to work as a servant," Art said bitterly.

"Arthur," his mother replied, "I won't stand here and have you speaking ill of a man as good as your uncle. He's a kind man and he worked hard for his money. He has a right to do with it what he wishes. If he gives it all away, what will your Aunt Margaret do with her big home if he dies, God forbid."

"I know, I know, Mom," Art answered, bored. "Our dough just rolls in the window. Every time the wind blows, it blows in greenbacks."

"The way you talk. It is not educated talk like your brother's, and I want you to know, I have nothing against your Uncle Mike. He never took the bread out of our mouths."

"That's because he doesn't like stale bread crumbs."

"Arthur!" she exclaimed indignantly.

"Oh, Mom, let's talk about something else," he said, rising, sticking his hands in his pockets, cocking his head to one side, and walking about the table.

She sat down and watched him move about rather restlessly. Her face saddened, and she said, speaking slowly:

"Your Uncle Mike, he has many calls on his money, and he is a very good man, a warmhearted man. If all rich men were as fine as he is, and gave as much to charity as he does, I tell you, this world would be better than it is."

"Yes, and with all he gives away," Art said, still moving about with his hands in his pockets, "he's got lots left. He's got so much, he has to stay awake nights thinking what to do with it, and he even bellyaches because he has to pay a few dollars taxes."

"Son, it is evil to be saying things the way you do. The Lord says for us not to covet our neighbor's goods."

Arthur thought a minute, grimaced, and said slowly, his voice conveying a tone of superior and almost sympathetic understanding:

"Yes, Mother, but, anyway, I don't see where it would hurt his pocketbook or his immortal soul if he helped us out more and saved you from working."

She blessed herself and then looked at him, pained. She said:

"That I should have a son so ungrateful to those that help him. I could cry bitter tears of shame for such a son."

Arthur jumped up, annoyed.

"Oh, rats." He shrugged his shoulders and looked out the window. He went on talking, as if in soliloquy. "I'll get along, going on jerking sodas. When Uncle Mike kicks the bucket, he won't enjoy his jack, and then I'll be better off, even though I don't have a copper in my pockets."

"Arthur, you should wash those evil words out of your mouth."

He looked at her, an expression of hopelessness on his face. He shook his head sadly from side to side. Then he said with

unexpected bitterness, casting an eye at the bathroom door as he heard the flushing of the toilet.

"Yes, I suppose it's all right if my pious brother wants you to be a servant."

She rose slowly and in angry dignity answered:

"Your brother Edward does not talk of you that way, or of your uncle."

"He doesn't know what time it is," Art said, half under his breath, turning and walking to the doorway of the room and then standing there and looking into the hallway.

"Fine things, fine things to be saying of your own flesh and blood. The poor are givers, not takers."

Art turned and walked back and forth restlessly. His mother gazed at him, pained.

III

Blushing, Eddie came out of the bathroom. His mother kissed him, hugged him tightly, and exclaimed:

"My son, how are you? My son."

He still blushed, and she released him.

"You forgot to ask him about his diapers, Mom," Art said, seated at the table before an opened book.

"See here, I'll hear no more of this from you," she said, losing her temper and pointing an accusing finger at Art.

"Cut it out, Art," Eddie said.

Art looked up and caught Eddie's eye. Eddie looked down at the palms of his hands. He was uncomfortable. He put them in his pockets. He took them out. He moved his arms and looked off at a holy picture in back of Art. His eyes were drawn back to his brother, and then he lowered them to stare at the floor. He stuck his hands in his pockets again, his gesture awkward.

"Oh, let's forget it," Eddie said softly.

"Now, we're all getting bright," Art said, his speech clipped.

"Mother, did you work hard today?" Eddie asked, still embarrassed.

"Sure, and I did," she answered in a martyred voice. "The lady had a reception. And, oh, there were fine ladies there, fine ladies."

"There were?" Eddie asked, looking down at his mother tenderly and yet guiltily.

"And many of them," she went on, excited, interested in what she was saying, "many of them spoke of you, fine words of you, my son, and such fine words they spoke of your Uncle Mike. They were praising him for the fine man that he is and for his charities. He does such a lot of good."

Art looked off, sneering.

"Son, tell me, did you have a good day in school with the scholars?"

"Yes, Mother," Eddie said self-consciously.

"You knew all your lessons?" she continued.

"Yes, Mother."

Her face warmed with love, and she smiled. But her smile was wan, pathetic. She sighed, and Eddie stood, nervous, uncertain, while Art still bent over his book.

"But I am tired from working on my feet," she said, sighing again and sitting down in a relaxed position.

"Can I get your slippers, Mother?" Eddie asked.

Art, bored, got up and left the room.

"Son, do. Indeed, it's a joy to have a son who thinks of his mother as you do."

Eddie got her slippers, bent down, took off her shoes, and as he put the slippers on her fat, swollen feet, he remarked:

"After all, I'll never have another mother."

"Ah, Son, someday your mother won't be with you, but, with the grace of God, she'll be above, looking down with pride and joy on all of the good you will be doing. She'll be with your father in Heaven, the Lord have mercy on his soul, and the two of us, God willing, we'll be so proud of our Edward, our Father Edward. Your poor father, he worked himself into an early grave, the good man."

Her face softened. A tear welled up in her eyes. She wiped it away and looked at the wall, moody. She shook her head, as if

she were shaking sadness and regret out of her mind, and said reflectively:

"No mother can complain when she has a son like mine."

She turned adoring, possessive eyes on him as he turned his back on her and carried her shoes to the closet, then sat down, nervous, shy, not daring to look her in the eye. She continued:

"I do dream of the day when I can receive the Blessed Sacrament from your consecrated fingers."

She glowed. Her face softened, and her emotion endowed it with beauty. He looked at her, touched and sad. Dreamily, she went on:

"And when I do get my rest in the cold ground, lying with the bones of your poor father, Lord have mercy on his soul, I'll go, Lord willing, with the blessing of my own son, Father Edward McGoorty, on my soul."

She sat, looking across the room at a picture of the Bleeding Sacred Heart of Jesus, her face shining, shining with the beatitude of a wonderful dream upon it.

"Mother," Eddie said in agitation, but he didn't seem to know how to say what he wanted to tell her. He patted her hair and shyly kissed her cheek. He turned and looked up at the ceiling, pained, his face contorted.

"I only wish Arthur was like you, Son," she said, her voice still soft. "He is a good boy with no real harm in him, but he does be restless and thinks funny things. I guess he gets that from going to dances and from the company he keeps."

"Art is all right," Eddie said, more controlled as he turned around and sat down by her at the round table.

"He is, and if we pray for him, he will be a good man. I do pray for him, too, pray for the day when I will see him a fine lawyer."

"He's smart as a whip if he only let's himself be smart. He'll be a successful lawyer, Mother, don't you worry."

"But I do be wishing he wouldn't smoke cigarettes, Son. Maybe you can talk to him, tell him he is too young to smoke. He pays no heed to me."

"I don't think he can be stopped, but then, maybe it doesn't hurt him," Eddie said vaguely.

She looked up, surprised, as Art entered the room, dressed up, his hair slicked down with grease, a coat and hat in his hand.

"Where are you going?" she asked, alarmed.

"Out."

"And haven't you your studies?"

"I finished them."

"I suppose you're taking out one of them bobbed-haired girls."

"Yes, I have got a date," Art said calmly but firmly.

"Young man," she said, pointing a finger at him, "mark my words, young man, you're making a mistake. You'll have plenty of time for girls later on."

"Mother, I think of now. I let later on take care of itself," Art said, and he shot a passing but knowing glance at Eddie, who sat silent, listening, watching, anxious.

"It's too bad your mother couldn't be doing that, too," she said, self-righteously.

"I work, don't I?" Art said in defense, but his voice was aggressive.

"And that's little enough, and it's little enough that you earn. And you spending too much of it on girls. And I'll wager that the girls you do go out with aren't fit companionship, for a decent boy."

As she finished saying this, her eyes fell proudly on Eddie, and his embarrassment deepened as he blushed.

"You don't know them. How do you know?" Art asked.

"If they were the decent kind, they wouldn't be taking a poor boy away from his books."

Art pressed his lips together tightly but said nothing. He shrugged his shoulders.

"Please, Mother," Eddie interrupted conciliatingly.

"Mother, all this is useless."

"Useless for me, a mother, to warn you against going with a chippy," she said bitterly.

"Mother, she's not a chippy. You don't know her. How can you say she's a chippy?"

"And so he has a girl?" she said, rising, stern, standing with her face saddened but angry. "He with the milk not yet dried on him." She became more scornful, more sarcastic, and again pointed a finger at him.

"I'll have you know that he has a girl."

"Mother, please let's not have a quarrel," Eddie ineffectually interrupted.

"His girl," the mother continued in sarcasm.

"Come on Mom," Art said, becoming suddenly light and at the same time talking with confident superiority. "Come on, the show's over. Let's let the curtain fall."

She threw her hands in the air, turned her back on him, and said, speaking as if to the wall:

"To be sure, he wouldn't stop at making fun of his mother before he goes out to dance with a chippy, and the Lord Himself knows where all this will lead to."

She put her hands together as if in prayer and stood silent, tall, dour. Then she turned to him and said with flashing eyes:

"No, you weren't born yesterday. If you were, you might have some respect for your mother."

"It's all right, I'm the stepson here."

"Go, go on with you! Go on and be damned to you!" she said loudly.

"I am," he said casually, but a tension in his lips betrayed the hurt feelings he was repressing.

"Art, please, maybe you could call the date off and stay in with Mother and me tonight."

Art contemptuously looked at Eddie, and then his eyes passed him and fixed on the bathroom door. Eddie couldn't face him, bit his lips, looked down at the page of a book.

"The time will come," the mother said histrionically, "the time will come when you'll rue this day."

"Well, good-by, Mother," Art said. He turned to Eddie. "Good-by, Kid, and learn your lessons and don't do anything I wouldn't do."

"Go, go out with that whore, whoever she is," the mother said bitterly.

"I will. And she's no whore. She's every bit as good as you," Art said, now nettled.

He went out, slamming the door after him.

IV

"He didn't have to do that," Eddie said.

She looked at him dolorously. Again he couldn't meet her eyes.

"Edward, if I didn't have you, I wouldn't care if I was dead or alive. Come here, my son."

He went to her.

"You're all that I live for," she said, looking up at him tenderly, with controlled passion. "You're all that I live for."

She clutched his hands, rose, pulled him to her, held him tightly for a long time. They were silent in each other's arms. Then, they separated, and both sat down, embarrassed.

"Mother, he really didn't mean anything. He's a little hot-tempered," Eddie said after they sat in another embarrassing silence.

"Son," she said, her voice lapsing into sternness again. "Son, pray with me for your erring brother, pray that the devil will not get his soul, ruin it, and send him burning into Hell forever."

"Yes, Mother," he said in a voice which was almost breaking.

She knelt down. Eddie knelt beside her, and they fixed their eyes on the picture of the Bleeding Sacred Heart of Jesus on the wall opposite them.

She blessed herself and intoned:

"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost!"

Eddie blessed himself. They prayed silently.

v

"Yes, Catherine Marie," Eddie said in agitation, speaking into the telephone.

He anxiously looked around the room as if someone might see him, as if the walls might even register and repeat what he said.

"What? . . . Well, gee, now, I'm really sorry you can't go some other night. . . . Well, what one? . . . Any night you say. . . . Gee, how about Thursday night? . . . It can't. . . . Of course, I only was. . . . Sunday night? . . . Gee, I'm sorry, then Monday of next week? . . . Say, you are a busy girl, aren't you? . . . Well, can I telephone you again next week?"

Art had come in, but Eddie, flustered and confused as he spoke on the phone, hadn't seen or heard him. Art stood looking at Eddie.

"All right," Eddie said, becoming aware that Art had caught him in the act. "Good-by, I'll call you then."

He hung up in embarrassment. Confused, he said:

"Hello, Art."

"Hello, Kid. Who was the dame?"

"Oh, it was—was Bill. He called me up about the Latin lesson. He was stuck on a gerund. I'm going to phone him back later in case he doesn't get along now with his homework."

"And that," Art said, amused, flopping into a chair, "that is what I call Christian charity."

"Well, he's a nice fellow, and he'd do as much for me."

"Your education's picking up, isn't it?" Art asked knowingly.

"What do you mean?" Eddie asked evasively, his face pale.

"Oh, nothing," Art said with a grimace. "Nope, nothing. I was just thinking—you're learning fast these days, aren't you?"

"What do you mean?" Eddie asked, trying to feign surprise.

"Father Henry heard me making a crack in the hall today that he didn't like," Art said suddenly. "He heard me objecting to the way God made the world. He told me in just so many words that the school was no place for blasphemers."

"You should have been more careful."

"Oh, it won't be any loss. I should care if they give me the boot. When you come right down to it, I don't love my alma mater."

"But think of what Mother would say, how she'd feel."

"Kid," Art said, lapsing into the tone of superiority he so often took with Eddie, "Kid, sooner or later, Mother has to wake up, and if that happens, there's going to be plenty she'll have to say and to feel about a lot of things. And that's all she can do. I'm free, white, and eighteen, and got my own life to live."

"Art, do you have to look at things that way?"

"If you want to let them tell you what to do with your life, you can. That's your lookout. I'm not raising my finger to try and do anything while Mother and the priests go ahead in making a priest out of you. It's none of my business. I'm not saying nothing, even though I'm beginning to suspect that you don't want to be one. But I'm going to raise all my fingers and my toes and my mouth, too, when anybody starts messing into what I want to be."

"What makes you say I don't want to be a priest?" Eddie asked, uncertain of himself.

"You were just talking with a jane on the phone," Art said, fixing his eyes on Eddie, who couldn't return the gaze.

"How do you know I was?" Eddie asked weakly, still looking off.

Art smiled with tolerant superiority and said:

"Listen, she only puts out to her friends, and she has no enemies."

Eddie jumped to his feet and angrily said:

"You haven't any right to make such statements about a decent girl's reputation."

"Skip it," Art said, still assuming a bored air. "Skip it,

brother. I have nothing to say. I apologize. I beg forgiveness. I hope she's nice to you."

"Well," Eddie insisted, "she's decent. There was nothing wrong in my talking to her. After all, when I'm a priest it'll be different. But won't I have to know something about people, human nature?"

"Don't argue with me. I agree, and I hope you've gone to the right source."

"I don't like your insinuations."

"Oh, rats. I'm just giving my blessings, that's all."

"Well, keep them and the change, too," Eddie said, turning away from Art.

"That settles me," Art exclaimed with a grin.

"I think what's my business is my business," Eddie said, looking out the window at a vacant lot.

"I think that's a good principle. Kid, never forget it."

Eddie turned around, moved awkwardly to a chair, sat down clumsily, and, sprawling his arms on the table, said:

"You know, I'm all mixed up. I don't know what's happening to me these days."

"I think I know what it is," Art said, now sympathetic.

"What?" Eddie asked eagerly.

"Against your own wishes, you're threatening to become human."

"But, Art, I'm serious."

"So am I."

"No," Eddie went on, shaking his head slowly from side to side. "Everything went along swell, and then, then, suddenly, something began happening inside of me."

Art became very knowing and answered:

"Sure. Sure. You suddenly found out that it was nice to see a girl's dress ruffle up when she had no pants on, and you even felt you'd like to see a little further up."

"I don't know what's the matter with me. I don't. You know, Art, I used to dream of myself, imagine myself saying mass, and I'd think of myself using consecrated fingers draw-

ing the host out of the chalice with them. I would . . . I would dream of myself, of how I would be able to do something that only a few men on earth do. Change bread and water into the body and blood of Christ." A look of sadness and guilt came over his face. "I used to imagine how I would go on and only do good in the world, helping people, forgiving them their sins, helping them to save their souls, and I never dreamed that I would have these troubles of my own."

"And now you've just started to learn how much easier it is to go to Hell than to Heaven. Now you want to commit some sins yourself."

Eddie shook his head.

"I don't. I don't. I'm worried. Maybe I haven't a vocation. I don't know. I don't know. But I tell you, Art, I don't know what to make of myself. I don't know what to think. I don't. I suppose, I guess, I must just be no good."

"Now, listen, Kid. Snap out of that. All it is is that you are threatening to become human, and that's swell."

"You don't know it all, what I do—with myself," Eddie confessed in red-faced, and the most painful, shame.

"Every guy does or has. That's only human, too."

Eddie looked up, and then at his brother, looked at him like a grateful puppy dog.

"Do you?" he finally asked, but in shyness.

"I have my married woman. I did."

"Will it drive me crazy?" Eddie asked, now in panic.

"Oh, hooley, that's all hooley. Only take my advice. Catherine Marie, she's nicer and will make it more fun."

"What do you mean?"

"Take my word for it. I know a lot about her. She'd like to make me."

"You mean she's a . . ."

Eddie halted. He was too confused to go on.

"Listen, I'm not goofing you. Don't be a sap. Sure, take her out, and you get what she's just dying to give. It won't hurt you."

"I didn't want to call her up. I fought against it. I called up

against my will power, my judgment. I just went to the phone and called."

"Now I know why you've had the moon in your eyes these last days."

"I've been all mixed up, thinking of this, and then—thinking that God has called me and I am denying Him."

"Listen, God hasn't called you. The priests at M.O.M. did, and so has Mother. They're good vocation salesmen at school, and the old lady has her mind set on it, and she's done the work here, too, and she wants to do it because she hasn't anything else in life and can lord it over all of our cousins. And now that our goddamned Uncle Mike has made his crooked money and doesn't know what to do with it, and he hasn't a damned thing to do but listen to his arteries get hard on him, why, he's doing some little penance at leisure, and you're that penance. He gives Mom fifty bucks now and then to be used in making you turn your collar around as his penance."

Appalled by Art's cynicism, Eddie looked at him agape.

"But it's cruel to put it that way," he finally said in weak protest.

"Maybe so, maybe not. But that's the way I see it."

Eddie became intensely serious and spoke slowly:

"You know, Art, I often just don't understand why you say some of the things you do, and I don't always know what you're driving at. You seem to be saying things all of the time that are so bitter, and you lash your words out as if you were using a whip to speak with instead of words."

"I'll tell you, Kid, why it is. Sometimes Mom, the priests, our grand and glorious uncle, all of them say and do things that give me the impression that I'm supposed to be too goddamn good for myself."

"But why do you have to look at things that way?" Eddie asked quizzically.

"Listen, Kid, you know that a number of things are bothering the pants off you, and you are all jazzed up and wondering about them. If you start really getting honest with yourself and starting to tell yourself that p's and q's are just p's and

q's, why, you might even wake up one fine morning and find out that you're talking pretty much the way I do."

"Art, it isn't, life isn't just that bad."

"You're wondering, for one thing, if they all don't want you, too, to be just too goddamn good for yourself. Now, aren't you?"

After pausing and not answering immediately, Eddie said:

"Art, I just wouldn't put it that way."

"You're beginning to tell yourself that when it comes right down to the matter, and all of the checks are cashed, you are you, and you got to live your own life."

"Well, yes, something like that," Eddie said, his resistance slowly giving way.

"And you're finding out that things are happening to you, aren't you?"

"Temptations," Eddie admitted.

"Temptations, if you want to call them that, but I'm not so sure that that's the way to put it."

"But, well. . . . You know. . . . Well, I look ahead, and it seems like it's going to be awfully hard, awfully dreary," Eddie said, using the word "dreary" self-consciously, apologetically, "being a priest, and I am afraid, afraid, yes, I'm afraid that I'm not going to be strong enough."

"Girls?" from Art with a lift of the eyebrow.

"Well . . . yes. And no, I'm not strong enough."

Eddie was so abashed, so flustered, that he nervously looked away, and he wiggled and strained in his chair.

"What am I going to do?" Eddie asked eagerly, frantically, as if throwing the burden of decision on his brother.

"Be yourself, Ed. Find things out for yourself."

Eddie sat, looking around the room, too disturbed and confused to speak.

VI

Eddie sat at a corner table of the Bamboo Inn with Catherine Marie Kenny. She was tall and lean, and her face was

almost crusted with powder. She had a knowing look, and at times gave the impression of being washed out. The orchestra played jazz music. Around them were other couples, talking, and now and then a girl or a young lad would break out in gay laughter. Chinese waiters moved about with dishes and soft drinks.

"It's crowded tonight," Catherine Marie said.

"I'm sorry," Eddie said shyly.

"Let's skip it. You'll learn to dance," she said lightly, making a casual gesture of dismissal with her right hand.

"Yes, it is crowded," Eddie then said.

"Yes," she said after a pause in the conversation, "it's usually crowded. This is the place to go. That's why I suggested we come here. It's the place to go. Only when it's crowded like tonight, I don't know, but it's funny I don't see many I know. That's funny. Usually when I come here, the place is just jammed with people I know."

"It is?" Eddie asked.

She didn't speak for a moment, and he sat waiting for her to talk, nervous. Then she said, smiling at him:

"Yes, it is. And I see your brother here often."

"You do?"

"Yes. He's a lady-killer. Girls like him. He dances divinely and is so witty. But he never seems to have any steady, and almost every time I see him he takes out a different girl."

"I guess Art's that way," Eddie said, more at ease because he had a subject to talk about.

"But why doesn't he have a steady?" she asked.

"I don't know."

"You're Art's studious brother. I hear you're so smart."

"Oh, no, honest, I'm not too smart. I guess we're different. There's only Art and I in the family, and we're different. Of course, there's my mother. My father, he's dead."

"He's not the only one in your family who's dead, is he?"

Eddie showed surprise. He asked very nervously:

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing. I just wondered if anybody else in your family was dead?" she asked, looking aside and smiling.

"Why, not that I know of," he said, bewildered, his face suggesting an inner panic.

"Your brother is very lively. Say," she said, more interested, turning back to look across the table at Eddie, "do girls really care a lot for him?"

"Why," Eddie answered, and he swung his shoulders about nervously, slouched awkwardly, sat up straight, and continued, "why I . . . I don't know."

The music started again.

"Say, say, do you want to try to dance with me again?" he asked.

"Oh, let's not. I'm tired. My feet are sore."

"I'm sorry," he said, and then with an accusing note coming into his voice, he added: "It's my fault."

"Why say that?"

"Well, I know that I'm not such a good dancer, of course. Now, Art, I never saw him dance, but I guess he's a dancer, all right." Eddie became very self-conscious and slowly added, "a whiz."

"I've seen better," she said with sudden haughtiness. "But you, Eddie, you haven't danced long, have you?"

"Well. . . . No. You see," he said in a serious, a confessional, tone, "you see, I haven't gone out much with girls."

"You and Art must be the most different kinds of boys ever to be brothers." She yawned, and then, with a gleam in her eyes, she said: "I'll bet two brothers couldn't be more different than the two of you."

"Well, we're different."

They didn't speak for a while, and then, leaning across the table, she commanded:

"Talk to me."

He grinned pathetically and then said in a stiff voice:

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean. I mean it's a compliment to me that a girl like you will go out on a date with a fellow like me. You see, I. . . ."

Awkwardly, he didn't know how to go on.

"Say, Eddie, behind all of this modesty, do you know—you have got a line. You've got one of the most original lines I ever heard."

"But, no, I haven't. Honest, I mean it. It's no line, it's . . . oh, gee, I don't know what I'm saying."

"Tell me something more, Eddie. I think you're sweet. Tell me, is your brother Art conceited?"

"Why, I don't know. I don't think so."

"He seems to act conceited when I see him out on dates and at dances."

"I don't—I never thought he was. It never occurred to me he was."

He grew thoughtful, and she watched him with gleaming eyes. Then, smiling insinuatingly, she said:

"But you're not conceited."

"I, no. I don't know. I try not to be."

"Tell me, *Edward*," she went on, dragging out her pronunciation of the syllables of his name, "tell me—what do you try to be?"

"Why, why, what do you mean?"

"Well, tell me, then, how do you and Art get along together?"

"Oh, all right. But why are you so interested in Art? I thought you knew him."

"Oh, he's something to talk about," she said flippantly.

"What's that? I didn't hear. This music, it's loud, isn't it?"

"Oh, nothing. I was just thinking out loud."

"Gee," he exclaimed irrelevantly.

"Gee, what?"

"I was looking at you."

"What am I, something to be looked at, like a circus?"

"Of course, I didn't mean it that way."

"Did you mean it at all, or was it your line?"

"I meant it. Honest, I did."

"Cross your heart," she commanded, her smile sweet but false.

Seriously, he crossed his heart with his fingers.

Then he became confused. She sat, calm, giving him no help, and finally his confusion seemed to become unbearable, and he suddenly asked her, almost with a suggestion of panic in his voice:

"How's school?"

She raised her eyebrows before commenting:

"Of all the questions? Why don't you ask me about the weather?"

"Well, I was just wondering," he said meekly. "I was wondering what might be the difference in teaching at your school and at mine?"

"Eddie, is Art as much of a philosopher as you are?"

"You know, Catherine Marie, there's something about Art that worries me," he said with gravity.

Her face lit up, and she asked:

"It does?"

"Yes, that is, Art, you know, sometimes, well, he suffers from the danger of having too much pride of intellect."

"Just what I thought. He's conceited."

"Well, no, it isn't that. It's—he's not humble about things that other people know more about than he does."

"For instance?" she asked, both amused and curious.

"Oh, religion."

"Doesn't he believe in God?"

"Oh, yes, I guess he does," Eddie said, now speaking more confidently. "But he's always saying he wants to be shown things. He has a lot of pride of intellect, and he doesn't see that, after all, he's only a pupil in high school. He's not willing to believe what the priests say, as if they really had a desire, well, to fool him, and they are really, after all, telling him what they've spent their whole life in studying."

"I knew he was conceited," she said spitefully.

"Oh, let's try to dance again," he blurted out.

"But, Eddie, really I'm tired, and, besides, you are such an interesting talker. Just talk to me," she said coyly, pursing her lips before him.

"Honest?"

She smiled.

"Gee, I'm glad you say that. I like to talk to you. And I know it, I shouldn't have asked you to dance when I really can't dance. Because, Catherine Marie—tonight's the first time I ever really danced."

"Oh, Edward, don't talk ridic."

"But maybe I am boring you. I don't mean to."

"Now, don't be so ridic. You must have an inferiority complex, the way you talk."

"What's that?"

"Inferiority complex? You don't know what an inferiority complex is?"

"Well, yes, I got an idea."

"Everybody talks about one, it seems. A person either has one or she hasn't one. If you have one, you don't think you're good enough. If you don't, you think you're too good. Like your brother Art."

"You know, maybe I have one. But," he was embarrassed but desperately went on, "maybe if a girl like you could . . . help me, I might lose it."

"Why, Edward, you place such faith in poor me."

"I mean it. Honest."

"And me, just a foolish, silly thing."

"Catherine Marie," he said with utter gravity, "you're not foolish."

"Amn't I?"

"No. You're a smart girl."

She laughed and said lightly:

"That's the first time anybody ever told me—*that*."

"I mean it."

"I'll bet your mother is proud of you, Edward," she said, disingenuously, but with a gleam in her eyes. "You get such good marks on your report card, don't you?"

"I try."

"I'll bet you won't be like Art because you're going some place in life."

"He says, now, if you don't have a good time when you're young, what will you have in old age? But I think you have to do more, and be sure you are going somewhere."

"Edward," she said, yawning, "you are a real philosopher."

"Oh, no, Catherine Marie. I got lots to learn before I could say that about myself."

"Yes," she exclaimed, yawning again. "I'm having just the time of my life. But it's getting late."

"I'm glad if you really had a good time, because, you know, well, I haven't been used to, well, to taking out girls, and maybe I'm not such a good time. But I wanted you to have a good time with me, I did—Catherine Marie."

"Why, child, it's been simply grand."

"Maybe you'll let me take you again."

"Of course I will. We'll certainly go out again, Edward. It's been months since I've been out with a boy where we've had so much to talk about."

"Catherine Marie, honestly, that makes me feel very good."

"I ought to thank you in the best way I could for a really enlightening evening," she said suggestively.

He looked at her, puzzled.

"But Mother will be worried if I don't go now. I said I would be home early."

"Yes," he said, rising.

"Yes, Edward," she said, bored.

They left, Eddie walking awkwardly behind her.

VII

"Hey, Jack," Mel Collins called, standing in front of the candy store just around the corner on Sixty-fourth Street from Mary Our Mother.

"Yes, sir," Jack Oliver said.

"That's the way to speak to your elders and superiors. You're learning, my boy, you're learning."

"Well, heel, shoot, and tell me what's itching that peanut brain of yours?" Jack asked.

"Listen, lend me your head, will you—I need to make some pencils out of it," Mel said.

Some of the high-school students laughed.

"You guys become more infantile every day," Art said curtly.

"McGoorty, stick around with us and help us grow up and get to be like you are," Mel said.

"Haven't the time, fellows." Art paused. "But I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll loan you my brother."

"Keep him," lean Pete Murphy said.

"You could use him," Art said, sticking his hands in his pockets. "He'll make you holier than holy water."

"You know," Mel interrupted. "You know, I never saw two guys more unlike than the McGoortys."

"Are you sure, Art," asked Pete, "that the old lady didn't cheat on your old man when one of you were conceived, to use the Biblical phrase for something nice and clean?"

"Not a chance," Art answered. "Not a chance. Nobody ever could have got to first base with my old lady. I don't even think my old man did. We must have been virgin births. Say, listen, when my old lady blows her nose, she doesn't blow out snot—she blows out holy water."

"That's a hell of a way to talk about your mother," Pete said, while some of the others laughed self-consciously. "And I tell you, honest, Art, I wish you wouldn't talk that way. It's wrong."

"Well, Pete," Art said, again speaking curtly, "those are heavy chains you got on your legs. It would be awfully hard on you, mooching yourself across the street so as not to hear me, wouldn't it?"

"I'm serious," Pete said.

"Is that someone calling you?" Art asked him.

"I don't hear anyone. I don't see nobody," Pete said, looking around.

"Pete, did you happen to get your brains in a second-hand store?" Art asked, while the lads laughed at Pete.

"Say," Pete shouted, "who the hell do you think you're talking about?"

"Christ," Art said, turning his head away from Pete, "Christ, but you sure are subtle, Murphy. You see, Murphy, I'm trying to tell you that if you don't like what I say, you can always stroll around and take in the air."

"Listen, McGoorty, don't tell me I'm dumb," Pete snapped.

"I don't have to, because you prove it without my aid," Art said.

"You goddamned, foul-mouthed sonofabitch!" Pete yelled, stepping up to Art. Pete swung on Art and caught him on the jaw.

"Hey, you guys," Mel protested.

Art swung back, catching Pete in the eye. Pete drew back and put his hand to his eye. As he bent down, Art faced him, waiting, ready to punch again.

"I'll get you for this," Pete said.

He went off, his hand on his swelling eye. They watched him go.

"Of all the dumb scraps I ever saw," Jack exclaimed.

"Well, I told him he was dumb," Art said. "I didn't want to hand the loogin one, but he cried for it. He's a sucker for a left jab."

"I live near Murphy," Mel answered. "We went to the same grammar school. His old lady's the scandal of our parish. She drinks like a fish. She's always drunk and raising hell."

"Maybe that's why he got his dander up hearing me talk about my old lady," Art said reflectively. "Hell, I didn't say anything except that my old lady talks and acts like a blessed candle."

"I don't care what she talks like," Jack commented. "Me, I'm straggling along back to school. So, so long, boys, and you can take care of your old ladies without me."

"So long, heel," Art called as Jack walked off and turned the corner.

"Up yours, sister," Jack shouted after him.

"He's all right. I like Jack," Art said.

"He's white, all right," Mel said.

"But I don't get it," Art went on. "I don't. Pete, letting out that way? Jesus, I didn't want to lay it on him, the dumb sock. But what was I going to do? He tried to pop me one, and so he just cries out for a sock in the puss like a baby crying for Castoria."

"Considering his old lady is what she is, I say it's queer that he should try sounding off like he did," Mel commented.

"Yes, maybe that's why he did it," Art said. "Maybe it's because he got sore because he wishes he had an old lady like mine. But, still, I'll say that I'd trade him old ladies any day in the week, and I wouldn't lose by the bargain."

"Art, frankly, you do talk sacrilegiously. You always blaspheme," Mel said.

"Listen, if you had a brother like mine, not to mention my old lady again, how'd you talk? Last night I had a date, and I'll be goddamned if the old lady didn't yawp all over again. You'd think I was committing a mortal sin merely going out on a date and that I was going to be fried for pork chops by the Devil himself, no later than this A.M."

"Well, maybe I understand it," Mel said. "But the reason I really spoke as I did, Art, was I was wondering. I was wondering if you really ever have questions in your mind?"

"What questions?"

"Questions about religion?" Mel said rather diffidently.

"Lots of the things they tell us in Christian Doctrine just sound fluky to me," Art said with an air of bravado.

"For instance?" Mel asked, still diffident.

"I'll tell you. It's not always something that's particular. It's . . . just, well, it's this—the whole damned scheme just doesn't seem to be on the up and up to me. It seems to me, well, often when they tell me how God made the world and the way you've got to act to get to Heaven, it seems that they're just telling me about a perfect system to beat the races when there just ain't no such animal."

"You don't believe in Heaven?" asked Mel in awe.

"I don't mean that. I suppose I do, but it's hard for me to get the business fixed in my mind, fixed as to just what Heaven is like."

"It's supposed to be a place where everybody is happy," Mel volunteered.

"Anyway, I'm going to have a smoke," Art said.

"Think if we take a few drags, we'll not be caught?" Mel asked.

Art nodded, and they lit cigarettes and puffed on them with an air of mystery and surreptitiousness.

"Watching my brother Eddie, that alone makes me want to do lots of things," Art said after inhaling. "And I say that not because he's a bad kid. He really isn't."

"But, Art, I'd like to know—just what is it about religion and Christian Doctrine that puzzles you?" Mel asked.

Art reflected a moment, smoked, screwed up his face, and then said:

"It's a little hard for me, for instance, to understand why God should give us something as sweet as nooky and then put a fence around us and say we can't have it unless we get married, hitch ourselves up to some pair of skirts and corsets for all of our life. That seems like a dirty trick God played on us, and I wonder why He did it?"

Mel reflected, nodded in agreement, and then he said, speaking slowly and seriously:

"Now, at the retreat last year, didn't Father Robert explain that? God gave us that . . . and He made it such a great pleasure because by making it just that way, He was sure future generations would be created."

"Yeh, but why did God have to worry about that? He didn't need any nooky Himself to make Adam and Eve. Couldn't he have gone on using worn-out ribs?"

"Well, since He can do anything He wants, I suppose He could have," Mel conceded.

"That's it," Art said, his face lighting up with pride in his own remarks. "Now, take me. I have a jane, my married lady

friend. She tells me a dame can have one hell of a time having a kid, and she says she's never going to have any. Not if she can help it. And so, I ask, why did God have to throw that into the bargain, too, not being satisfied with making it a sin?"

"Father Robert told us that it's animalistic, like beasts, if you get your ashes hauled without being married, and hauling them so you can have kids for the next generation," Mel said.

"Maybe so, but I say this—when I'm with my married jane, I like being that kind of an animal; I like it plenty."

"I don't know," Mel said, puzzled. "I don't know. It seems to me that it shouldn't be wrong and that God shouldn't have fixed it out the way He did. I don't know why God makes people grow old and die, now, either. And suffer like they do sometimes. Of course, I know, mankind has to suffer by the sweat of its brows because Adam and Eve ate the wrong apple, but isn't it a hell of a thing to do, to make everybody suffer for thousands of years because they bit into an apple?"

Art laughed.

"What's the joke?" asked Mel.

"I was thinking. After I get through school here and finally die, and if they want me to go downstairs and warm my can on a piece of burning brimstone, I'm going to say this—I'm going to say, 'Listen, Mr. Christ, Jesus Christ, I been to Hell already. I went to school at Mary Our Mother.'"

Mel laughed, and, still laughing, said:

"Father Flaming Michael and Father Robert should just hear you say that."

"It wouldn't hurt them to get their ears burned now and then," Art said. "You know, I can't make it out why God should want to make so many people burn and never change His mind about letting them out of Hell. Particularly, why should He make a guy burn forever, just because he wanted a little fun with a jane when he and the jane liked it, and it didn't cost nobody else a sou? A guy is with a skirt in the park, and, hell, there you are in the park, and before either of you knows what's happening to you, you're just working sweetly away. Now, why in Hell should that harm God?"

"I don't know much about it, but I don't see why it has to hurt Him," Mel said in bewilderment.

"I'd like to ask the priests questions like that," Mel said.

"Don't," Art said decisively. "With them babies, mum's the word."

"Art, aren't you ever afraid with the way you talk?" Mel asked.

"Why should I be? But look at these deadheads," Art said, dropping his smoked-down butt as three students came up to them.

"What's that, fellows?" asked Francis Coggins.

"Dust out your ears, and the three of you will hear me when I call you deadheads," Art joshed.

"What?" Francis Coggins asked, peering over his spectacles.

"Coggins, I'll write you a letter and tell you how dumb you are. Forget it," Art said.

Turning to Mel, Coggins said:

"He's been rehearsing that crack to spring it on me for over a month."

"You guys go ahead and jaw. I got something else on my mind," Mike Maloney said, his round face framed in a self-satisfied grin.

"Mick, if you could prove to me that you've got a mind, I'd believe you had something on it."

"Save yourself the brainstorm, McGoorty," Mike shot back.

"He's gog-eyed about a waitress on Sixty-third Street," stumpy Joe Peters said.

"Anybody who wouldn't be gog-eyed over her is just plain dumb. Why, do you know how she's built?" Mike said assertively to Joe.

"How?" smirked Art.

"You know how," Mike answered.

"No, I don't. You asked me did I know, and I said I didn't. So tell me," Art said.

"Well," Mike said with sudden doggedness, "she's built."

"Listen, Maloney!" Art exclaimed.

"Yes, I'm listening, McGoorty."

"Well," Art said, pointing, "see that building across the street?"

"I see," Mike said, looking puzzled. "But I don't see nothing funny about it."

"Oh, it's just built," Art said casually.

The lads laughed. As Mike began to say something, Eddie came along, and they all noticed him. Seeing them, he flushed, and then he smiled in a pathetic attempt at being jolly.

"Here comes the crucifix that walks and talks," Mel said quickly.

"Eddie, did you ever pinch a feel off a girl?" asked Joe.

They snickered. Art looked bored.

"Quit picking on him," Joe said.

Eddie looked at them, confused and not knowing what to answer.

"Listen, he's got that big brother of his there," Al said, pointing at Art. "Why doesn't his big brother stick up for him?"

"I can take care of myself," Eddie said, nettled.

"Sure he can," Art said, and then, turning meaningfully toward his brother, he added: "Can't you, Eddie?"

"I don't know what the heck this is all about," Eddie said.

"Catechism, Eddie. Did you ever see a pig's rump hole?" asked Mike.

"Art, there goes that foul mouth of Maloney again," Mel said. "Why should we let him corrupt a decent lad like your brother?"

"Eddie," Mike went on, ignoring the others, "Eddie, I'll tell you what we were talking about. I was going to tell the boys about my honorable intentions toward a waitress who works on Sixty-third Street. Want me to tell you, too?"

"I can't be bothered," Eddie said, ill at ease.

"That ought to hold you, you funny-faced Irishman," Art said to Mike.

"All right, only, Eddie, it ain't a bother. I was going to talk about the sweetest thing in the world," Mike said.

"Who is she?" asked Eddie.

"Know what a queen is?" Mike asked him in return.

"Listen, Kid," Art interrupted, turning to his brother, "you'd better be traveling along. If you hang around here, you'll be willfully placing yourself in the occasion of sin."

"Hey, fellows, Art does know the catechism. He isn't as dumb as I thought," Mike said in feigned surprise.

"I can take care of myself without anybody's help," Eddie asserted.

"Boy, I'd just love to see you taking care of yourself," said Mel. "I mean with a red-hot jane."

Again Eddie blushed.

"I heard enough of this idle chatter from you bums," Al said, and he strolled away.

"See what you did?" Mike said to Eddie, pointing at Al as the latter turned the corner.

"For Christ sake, cut it out!" Eddie shouted at them.

Mike pointed a finger at Eddie, waved it, and talked almost as if he were speaking with a baby:

"No, no, never, mustn't."

"I'm sick and tired of the way fellows act toward me. What the hell do you think I am?" Eddie said, still angry.

"I agree with you, kid. Sock 'em," Joe encouraged.

"Well, I'm leaving," Mel said. "I can't stand the sea as rough as this. And I'm afraid of Eddie McGoorty."

Grinning sarcastically and, also, a little stupidly, he wandered away.

"Let the kid alone," Art finally said. Then, turning to his brother again, he went on, "you're only trying to be human, aren't you, Kid, even if it is a goddamned hard effort?"

"And you, too," Eddie said to his brother pugnaciously.

"That let's me out," Art said. "I'm getting cold feet. Fellows, I warn all of you—whenever you see a two-fisted saint, look out."

Grinning and waving his hand, Art also strolled off.

"Eddie, all you need to do is just about cough, and you chase the boys away in fear and trembling," Mike said.

"I don't see why," Eddie said, his anger cooled. "I . . ." He paused and stood helpless, incapable of going on.

"Well, figure it out," Mike said, strolling away also.

"Aw, heck," Eddie said in bewilderment.

"Eddie, you take their kidding too much to heart," Joe said sympathetically.

"What am I going to do? They always seem to lay for me," Eddie told him.

"You shouldn't let on that they get your goat, that's all. They wouldn't have any fun out of it if they didn't get a rise out of you."

"I know it," Eddie said earnestly. "But, gee, if you got this all of the time, you wouldn't like it. Why, I often come around, and they stop talking the minute they see me. As if they couldn't say things in front of me. They always act as though I were a wet blanket, and they make me feel I am just that. And that makes me start acting like one."

"I tell you, nobody will ever keep on kidding you if you don't let 'em get your goat. If you would just let their cracks wash off your back like water off a duck's back, they wouldn't keep it up."

"I always tell myself," Eddie said reflectively, as if he were soliloquizing as well as speaking to Joe, "I always tell myself that, and I always resolve and tell myself, gee, darn it, this time if anybody starts trying to make a monkey of me, I'm not going to let them, not let them get under my skin. But something always happens, Joe."

"Just what I said."

"Joe, will you tell me the truth if I ask you a question?"

"Sure—what is it?"

"Honest?"

"Hell, yes, Eddie. Do I look or act like I was a bull tosser?"

"No, but . . . it's a personal question. I want you to tell me something without . . . I mean . . . I want you . . . if you will, to tell me if you really think I am a wet blanket."

"Why, no," Joe answered, smiling.

"Well, then, what is the matter with me?" Eddie asked eagerly, nervously.

"I don't know that there's anything really the matter with you."

"But what makes me seem so different from the rest of you? What makes me seem set apart?"

"I don't know that you're so different. Just smarter, more serious, less wanting to raise hell. I guess you're human, though."

"No, I mean it. I am. I am . . . I seem different. I'm not taken as one of you the way Art is."

"Well, yes, you and Art are different."

"But why?" Eddie asked, again as if he were addressing himself. "Why are we different, Art and I?"

"Well, yes, we figure Art is like us, just ordinary, and you're not."

"Yes, I know," Eddie said, shaking his head understandingly. "That's it, and I know it. I'm different, something supposed to be funny, a funny-looking fish that belongs behind a glass cage where everybody can come and look at me and laugh, and say that I am to be looked at and laughed at."

"Eddie, that's a little bit extreme," Joe said, looking curiously and uneasily at Eddie, who had become so nervous, so self-accusing.

"How? How?" Eddie asked him.

"Well," Joe said, now embarrassed, "well, it's just that the fellows don't think you're interested in the same things as they, as we, are. You seem to be holy, holier than the rest of us. Of course, that's natural, and if you were a hardened sinner like us, it's only natural you wouldn't be planning to be a priest."

"Well, how do you know I am planning that?" Eddie asked like a man making a vital, even a terrible, decision.

"But you are, aren't you?" Joe asked, stepping back automatically because of his surprise.

"I don't know."

"What else could you be—or do?"

"Well," Eddie said, now speaking with nervous and uncontrollable impetuosity, "well, lots of things. What else are all of you going to be?"

Joe shook his head from side to side, his lips pressed meaningfully together, and he said, speaking slowly:

"Now, that surprises me. You mean it—you aren't sure you're going to study to be a priest?"

"No. I'm not! And I'm tired of some things."

Again Joe paused before speaking, and then he said:

"Maybe, yes, maybe you're just starting to—to develop late. Maybe once you start, you'll sow more wild oats than the rest of us put together."

"I don't say what I might or might not do. But I know this, Joe—I'll be darned if I am going to let everybody go on thinking about me the way they do. I'm going to show them."

"Don't tell me, Eddie, that you're going to do something—reckless?"

"Joe, I'm serious. I can't go on like this—any more. My mother—she's been saying I'm going to be a priest for so long, since I was in second-grade grammar school, and the sisters said it, and the priests say it here, and everybody does. They've all, always set me aside, made me different. And others never would speak to me the way they did to one another. I've always been set apart this way. I don't like it. I'm human, too. I want to be human. Why, some of the fellows act before me almost the way they do before Father Robert or Father Henry."

"We seem to think you don't get a kick out of what gives us a kick."

"Joe, they don't know me. They don't. My brother Art, too, he's like the rest. To hear him talk, all you'd think I ever did was pray and study."

"Well, Eddie, I don't know. It seems to me that it all amounts to this—everybody isn't the same—in character."

"But goldarn it," Eddie said insistently, "I don't want to be different."

"Well," Joe said reflectively, "you're not really a sissy. You don't talk like a sissy. Nobody thinks you're that. I guess it's just, maybe, you like to read books, study more, and don't cut up to hell or brag and pretend that you do. I guess you have a different conscience than the rest of us."

"Joe, do you ever have a bad conscience?" Eddie asked, fixing his eyes on Joe.

"Me, no. I never do," Joe answered with bravado, but without returning Eddie's direct stare.

"You never worry about your sins?" Eddie asked eagerly.

"A hardened sinner like myself," Joe continued with bravado.

"What kind of sins have you committed?" Eddie asked, flustered, speaking as if impelled by impulses beyond his control.

"Every one on the calendar," Joe boasted, persisting in his air of bravado. "And there aren't enough sins on the calendar, either. There ought to be new ones invented from time to time."

"I'm serious, Joe. What about girls?"

"There's nothing previous to what I mean," Joe said casually.

"And do girls like it?"

"Love it, they love it. Listen, McGoorty, do you know the kind that love it best?"

"No?"

"Well, I'll tell you," Joe said with an air of profundity. "I'll tell you—the nice ones. The good ones. When you break in a good girl right, she never wants to do anything else. But, boy, that's when it's sweet, sweet; but, damn it, that's the kind, too, that burns you up."

Unable to look Joe in the eye, Eddie timidly asked:

"Joe, is this true, and do you know it, or did someone tell you this?"

"Say, you don't think I'm another Mike Maloney, do you?"

"Who were the girls?" Eddie asked, his voice conveying shame because of his pruriency.

"You wouldn't know, McGoorty, and just as was told in class the other day by Father Robert that Shakespeare said—what's in a name?—well, what's in the names of the girls? A rose by any other name is just as sweet."

Eddie was nervous and said nothing. He couldn't keep his hands still and kept playing with his clothes.

"Boy, finding out the delights of a good girl, that's Heaven,"

Joe said with vanity. "But I got to dash over to Stony Island and get back before the bell rings."

He left with a wave of his hand, and Eddie watched him swagger.

"I'll show them," Eddie said, half aloud, intensely, his voice strained, his face intent.

Beefy and bucolic, Father Henry strolled around the corner, clad in his brown robe and adjusting his glasses. Seeing Eddie, he smiled with friendliness and said:

"Hello, there, McGoorty." He adjusted his glasses and came forward to stand near Eddie. "I hope that the exercise of thought that you seem to be struggling through is not a serious matter."

"Why, hello, Father," Eddie answered in surprise, and he looked evasively off so as not to meet the eyes of the priest.

"Well, where are your companions in sin?" the priest asked in a tone of levity.

"Who?"

"Oh, your brother, and sausage Maloney," Father Henry asked, and they both laughed, but Eddie's laugh was a little forced. "And the rest of that gang of pirates?"

"Oh, they went off—somewheres, Father."

"Chasing janes, on their lunchtime, I'll wager," Father Henry said with contempt.

"I'm not sure."

"Well, I am," Father Henry laughed. "You don't have to be afraid you'll be giving them away to me, McGoorty. I know them. If they aren't off chasing chickens across the road, that's because there are no chickens."

"I don't know, Father," Eddie said, embarrassed.

"All right, my boy," Father Henry said kindly. "You stick to the way you're going. Someday, if you do, you won't be sorry. They're just kids. Kids. You're more serious, more grown up. Your mind is rooted in eternal things, not chickens."

"I guess, Father," Eddie answered vaguely, "that they go out, when they do, with nice girls."

Father Henry looked at Eddie paternally, but then he said in utter derision:

"Few girls are nice any more. Most kinds in this jazz age are pagans. Pagans! The world, my boy, is becoming pagan, pagan, and it is up to boys like you to prepare to fight paganism. It's up to you, to boys like you, to prepare yourself and help save the world."

"Well, gee, Father, I . . ." Eddie said, a light coming into his eyes.

"I'm serious now, McGoorty. You needn't be modest with me. I mean it." Father Henry closed his right fist and lightly tapped Eddie on the jaw. His bucolic smile broke over his face. "I mean it. I'm talking not to tell you just my own opinion. But it's the opinion of all of us priests on the faculty here. McGoorty we take great pride in you and we have confidence in you. With so many silly kids having cars to drive, and with Prohibition and this jazz age, the world is in danger, the danger of Paganism. And the Church needs boys like you to help save the world. Here, we try to fight sin, and we think so much of you because you're going to be one of us. God will give you the grace. McGoorty, you have a marvelous future, a holy future in Christ's work."

"Father, I hope so if . . ." Eddie paused, confused.

"If I ever saw a boy with a vocation, it's you," Father Henry went on.

"Yes, Father."

"We aren't priests with our experience for nothing. We can tell a boy like you when we see one."

"Well, Father, I try, I try to give myself every chance to see if I have a vocation, and if I have—to be true to it."

"You have, and you will be, my boy. And you are a good example, a good example here at school to all of your classmates, all of the pupils. You can even be a better one, too, if you just make it a point to. Just not be a goody-goody. We priests, we're men, we're not goody-goodies. We don't like a goody-goody. But just as we try with God's grace to set an example, you try, you try to be an example in your daily con-

duct and contacts. You can show the boys here in our school how a lad can be manly, a regular fellow, and still live a holy life and be virtuous and studious and happy. For that is the life that makes a man happiest. No man is happier than a priest. You do that, and you'll be respected, and you'll do good, great good, and you won't be any wet blanket because you are decent and virtuous."

"Father, I try, but maybe I shouldn't, maybe I'm not worthy to have such confidence placed in me, Father."

"Not at all, not at all. Even though your humility is admirable. We have watched you. I tell you, McGoorty, and I wouldn't do it if I didn't know you so well that it won't give you a swelled head—we, we priests are more proud of you than of any lad in this school. My boy, listen to a priest. As a priest I say go on as you have, and one day the Church and Our Order will be proud, mighty proud, of you. Yes, listen to the words of a priest who has started to get fat. I tell you that you have the makings of a wonderful career, that you can do wonderful things in life for God and the Church and yourself. And do them! And you will, and we'll help, and then one day God will look down on you with pride and joy. You'll do wonderful work, and we all know that you will. That's why we're so proud of you. It's pupils like you who convince us that our work here isn't in vain."

"Well, Father . . . I . . . I thank you . . . and, well, gee, I'll, I'll try to live up to what's expected of me."

"You will," Father Henry said, now speaking less seriously. "Your brother's a smart boy, too, but reckless. He has a pride of intelligence that's dangerous. You should have talks with him, and pray for him, and influence him. Does he visit the Sacraments regularly?"

"Yes, Father."

"Keep after him, and God will give you the grace to influence him. But don't be obvious. God will help you find a way to help him. He needs help with his pride of intelligence. He's in danger of falling into the sloppy ways of half-baked thinking, of

taking notions for ideas, and he needs you, needs your good influence. Do that."

"Yes, Father, I'll try."

"Well, it's time for school to recommence. Now, I must try to put something into the woodenheads."

A bell was heard ringing, and boys came running by as Eddie and Father Henry walked around the corner to the school building.

VIII

When the mother came home, she noticed that Eddie didn't have his books out and, after greeting her sons and hanging up her coat, she said, standing in the dining-room doorway:

"Edward, you ought to be at your books instead of just talking away the evening with him. Your books give you the learning to do God's work."

"Mother, and what's wrong with me today?" Art asked.

"You know well and good," she answered curtly.

"Well, I'm not so sure, Mom. Everything that can be wrong with anybody seems to've been wrong with me at some time or other, if it still isn't, and so I guess I can't be sure what to say or know."

"Oh, that I should have a son like you," she exclaimed piously.

"Mom, let's cut it out," Art said, while she looked histrionically at the ceiling.

"Cut it out? Yes, a nice way of talking to your mother after what you did."

"Mother, what's wrong?" Eddie asked.

"Son, how thankful I be, day after day, that God gave you to me, that you are not like your brother. Oh, but I curse the day he was ever born to me. It's trouble enough I've had with him already."

"Mother, quit playing games," Art said.

"And it's games he calls it."

"Mother, please, must we fight?"

"Yes, I say that, too. We went a few rounds the other day. Let's call an armistice," Art said.

"If your father was alive, Lord have mercy on his soul, you wouldn't be doing the things you do."

"He wouldn't have cared. He was drunk most of the time."

"Please, Art," Eddie said, hurt and utterly ineffectual.

"God in Heaven, Mother of God, Blessed Saint Joseph, please relieve me of the responsibility of this son," she said in an intoning voice, lifting her hands above her head awkwardly.

"Mother, Mother, please—what's wrong?" Eddie asked.

"That I should have lived to see this day," she went on, her accents dripping with pity for herself.

"Whatever it is, it doesn't look so bad to me," Art said, annoyed.

"I'll tell the priests. I'll tell Father Michael," she continued.

"Well, I hope that'll be comforting," Art said.

"Mother, what's the matter? What happened?" Eddie asked nervously.

"That my own son should be a thief and steal from his poor mother's hard-earned pocketbook," she said bitterly.

Art was surprised, and he asked:

"What's happened? I haven't been stealing. I don't steal from you. I work."

"Good Saint Joseph, that I, after working so hard all of my life, that I should have raised a son to be a thief."

Eddie turned to the window in grave discomfort.

"If that's the mystery, I didn't touch your pocketbook. I never stole any money from you. What's this all about?"

"I'm blind. Blind, I suppose. I'm an ignoramus, a servant woman, a fool, and I don't know what to do and what's what. I am ignorant, a greenhorn. I didn't have five dollars in my pocketbook at all. I didn't."

"Mother, I don't know what you mean," Art said, while Eddie stood listening, pale, avoiding the gaze of either of them.

She answered him with an angry and suspicious stare.

"Are you sure you didn't lose it?" Art asked.

"No I didn't." She stood erect, at her full height, and in temper. "I hope the chippy you spent it on, my hard-earned money, never has one day's luck in this world or the next," she said bitterly.

"Mother," Art said, his voice now persuasive, "Mother, now why don't you be sensible and keep your head? Now, first, I don't know what you are talking about, and I don't know what you mean by saying that I'm always running around with some chippy, and, second, I didn't take your money."

"Mother, be calm," Eddie said, agitated.

"And let me say this. I'm getting sick and tired of the belly-aching that goes on around here," Art said, again growing angry.

"And well you may," she snapped back at him. "Well you may. There wouldn't be any . . . any bellyaching if you were the son to me that your brother is."

"Do we have to go into all that again?" Art asked in disgust. He flopped into a chair and wearily added, "All right, let's call the roll again."

"Mother," Eddie urged. "Art didn't take the money. I know it."

Art looked sharply at Eddie but said nothing.

"I suppose the money just walked, walked out of my pocket-book. It stepped right out of my pocketbook on two good legs. It put its hat and coat on and, without a hello or a good-by or an as-you-please, it walked just like a man or a woman. It just marched right out the door to have a good time."

"Forget it, Ed. She'll get over it," Art said.

"And now isn't that the fine way to talk to your mother? Do you talk like that to the chippies?"

"Mother, I won't discuss this further when you insist on being foolish."

"I wasn't a fool," she said in angry self-pity, "I wasn't a fool when I nursed you. I wasn't a fool when I washed your diapers, and fed you and clothed you, and gave you the care the like of

which no mother ever gave an ungrateful son. I wasn't a fool then. But now, when he thinks he's a man, his mother is a fool."

"Well, figure it out your own way," Art said, rising and leaving the apartment.

IX

"Mother, Art didn't take the money," Eddie said.

She dried her eyes and looked at him softly. She spoke tenderly:

"Edward, you are such a good boy, a fine boy. You are so good, you know so little of sin and evil that you even stick up for your ungrateful brother." Her voice throbbed now. "Oh, God, what would I do without you, what comfort would I have in my poor hard life!"

"Mother," Eddie began in painful agitation, "Mother, I . . . I want to say something."

"No, Son. Just bring your chair here and sit near me," she said, as if with infinite sadness.

Eddie hesitantly brought his chair near hers.

"But, Mother, I want to say something," he began.

She extended her arms, embraced him, laid his head against her breast, and said with pathos of feeling:

"No, Son, just sit here with your head against your poor mother."

"But listen, Mother . . ." he said, still disturbed, not looking up.

"Please, Son," she interrupted, hugging him against her. "No, sit, sit here and put your head against your poor old mother."

She stroked his head.

"Oh, how I thank the good God in Heaven for giving me you, my son," she said with the same pathos of intense feeling.

"Mother, you don't understand Art. Let me tell you," he said.

"No, Son," she said, growing sadder. "No, Son, just sit, sit like you did when you were just a baby. Ah, then it was I would

sit and see you grown up, a priest, a priest of God." She sighed, and tears of joy flowed from her eyes unchecked. She glowed. "And to think that now you are so much nearer, and you'll be graduating this spring with your diploma, and your fine education, and then you'll be starting to study to be one of God's own." Again she sighed. She stopped crying, but the tears slid down her pallid cheek, unwiped. "Ah, sit by me awhile, my son. When you are off studying to be one of God's own, your poor old mother will be here thinking of you, giving you all she can—her mother's prayers. It's lonesome I'll be, but I'll be knowing that it's for God. I raised you for God, for God's work on earth. What more can a mother ask for than for a son like you, marching in God's holy ways? What more solace and comfort could a mother ask in this bitter world?"

There was silence. She stopped crying. He looked up and, with his expression saddened, he tried to say:

"Let me tell you, Mother . . ."

She interrupted him again:

"Be still, my son. And promise me, promise your mother that you'll always pray for your sinful and ungrateful brother, pray that he will see the light of God, pray that God will put grace in his black heart."

"But, Mother—" he said.

"Promise me, me, your poor hard-working mother," she said, her voice now one of possession, of command.

"Yes, Mother," he said with resignation, and he looked off at the picture of the Bleeding Sacred Heart of Jesus.

"Son, if you only knew the comfort you were to me," she said with sudden and intense sadness.

"Yes, Mother," he said with a resigned dutifulness.

"But you have your books," she said. "Study your books, my son, the way the priests want you to, so you can be a fine good priest, a pride to God Himself, and to me, the poor mother who bore and raised you."

Eddie moved his chair over, nervously got his books, and sat down to them.

"Gee," he exclaimed. He bent over his books.

X

The house was quiet. Eddie was studying, and the mother was in her bedroom when Art returned.

"Is Mother calmed down?" Art asked, throwing his coat on a chair.

"Yes," Eddie said, not looking up.

"Listen, Kid," Art said.

"Gee, I'm all mixed up. I don't know what to do," Eddie said weakly.

"Kid, why the hell didn't you ask me? I'd have loaned you the dough. I could have snatched it from the cash register."

"How did you know I took it?" Eddie asked in surprise. His face flushed with the admission.

"Never mind. You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"Honest, Art," Eddie said weakly, defensively. "I tried to tell Mother that you didn't take it. I was trying to confess to her I did, and she, she kept interrupting me, and I became afraid to."

Art shook his head, half in contempt, half in pity.

"You're a bigger damn fool than I thought," he said, still shaking his head.

"What do you mean?" Eddie asked helplessly, utterly disoriented.

"Listen, if you told Mother," Art said, lowering his voice, "what good would it do? Say, what the hell do you want to do, break her heart? Hell, do you want Noah's flood in our own home? Christ, she'd cry her eyes out and she'd never get over it. We'd have to paddle around the rooms here in a canoe from her tears."

Eddie rose, his face determined, and he said with the determination of a weakling.

"I'm going in and tell her."

Art grabbed him and pulled him back.

"Let me go, let me do it, Art," he protested.

"Listen," Art said, gripping him firmly, looking him in the

eyes. "Listen, if you do, I'm going to smack you down. If you do, I'm going to smack your teeth. Now, you forget it. I'll get the dough and put it around where she can find it, and that'll settle it. The old lady thinks you're a saint, and don't bust her dream into splinters. It's all she's got."

"But you'll steal it, and that's going to be another sin," Eddie said as Art relaxed his grip.

"This is no time for you to start heeding your exquisite conscience," Art answered.

"Art, why am I this way?" Eddie asked helplessly, sinking into a chair, almost breaking into tears.

Art shook his head and spoke, looking past his brother:

"When he's a little bit human, he bellyaches. Listen, you wanted to take a jane out, and you did it and stole the dough. Now I'll give you the dough and the old lady won't know the difference, and that won't break her heart."

XI

The church was quiet, and Eddie entered the dark confessional, knelt, waited until the priest turned the slide, and then Eddie said in a hushed and anxious voice:

"Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. My last confession was three weeks ago."

As Eddie had begun, so had the priest started:

"*In nomine Patri et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen!* Yes, my son."

"And since my last confession, Father, I missed my morning and evening prayers twice. And I took the name of the Lord in vain a couple of times."

"How many is a couple?" the priest asked gently, and at the same time in a rather bored voice.

"About four times, Father."

"Go on, my boy."

"And, Father, when I should have been paying attention and had my mind on the progress of the Mass, and having

fitting prayers and thoughts, I thought of other things, mundane things."

"Were these major or minor grievances?"

"Some were . . . Father . . . major . . . I thought . . . about mundane things during the important parts of the Mass, and, Father . . . I . . . I violated the Sixth Commandment . . . twice by immoral thoughts and desires during Mass."

"And how many more of these sins of thought during the Mass were grievous?"

"Two or three, Father."

"Go on, my son."

"And, Father, I disobeyed my mother a few times, and, Father, often I didn't apply myself as hard at my studies as I should have, and I would often, Father, maybe let my mind wander off away from the books and what was said by the priest in class. And, Father, I caused my brother to become angry with me, and to sin in his anger by angry words and blasphemies a number of times."

"Yes, my boy."

"And, Father," Eddie said in transparent embarrassment, "I broke the Sixth Commandment . . . ah . . . ah . . ."

"Alone or with another?"

"Alone, by myself."

There was an intense but brief moment of silence in the confessional, and then the priest said, in that same voice that was both kindly and yet bored:

"Physically or mentally, was it?"

"Both."

"How many times, son?"

"I . . . I violated the Sixth Commandment physically by myself, I think . . . ten times, and . . . and when I did it, I also harbored immoral thoughts, desires, imaginations, imagining myself violating the Sixth Commandment in adultery with another . . . of the opposite sex, Father."

"How long have you been guilty of this sin?"

"I . . . Father, I violated this Commandment, I . . . I

committed this sin in this way only three times prior to . . . to my last confession."

"Do you pray for Grace, my boy?"

"Yes, Father."

"Often? Regularly?"

"Yes, yes, Father. I say my morning and evening prayers, and I say the rosary in bed to myself every night to put myself to sleep, except of late, Father, that is, the last few weeks, I . . . I have tried to say the rosary but, instead of doing it, I would be tempted to do this thing and to think immoral thoughts. And, Father, I make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament every day, but, Father . . . I sinned."

"Son, only prayer, prayer can save you from the commission of this secret sin. This secret sin, Son, is ruinous, ruinous to body and mind and health. Ruinous to your soul. You must struggle, fight, struggle hard to conquer yourself, to fight and win out over temptations of the Devil. Do you avoid the occasion of sin?"

"Yes, Father, that is . . . I try to."

"Do you associate with boys whose talk is immoral and sinful?"

"No, Father, that is, except the boys I see in school. They sometimes talk that way."

"Do you go out with girls?"

"No, Father . . . except . . . except, Father, I sinned by stealing five dollars . . . I took it from my mother's pocket-book to take out a girl. And, Father, I wanted to, I had the desire to sin with her, but . . . but I couldn't . . . because I didn't know how to start and how to ask her to let me sin with her. But I sinned in thought, by desire, by wanting to violate the Sixth Commandment with her."

"When was this, my son?"

"It was . . . ten days ago. Father, ever since then I have been having many immoral thoughts. They come to me all of the time, it seems."

"Do you participate much—in sports, in activities like that?"

"No, Father."

"What do you do with your free time?"

"I read and study."

"What kind of books do you read? Immoral, pagan books?"

"No, no, Father, books I get out of my school library. It's Catholic."

"This school here?"

"Yes, Father."

"And you give way to these evil thoughts and temptations?"

"I try not to, and sometimes, many times, Father, I do. I just seem to."

"How hard do you try not to?"

"I try to pray when they come, or I try to occupy my mind on things that aren't sinful. But, Father, before I know it they're back, I'm tempted. And I give way, and, Father, when I give way, at the time I do, I seem to like giving way, and then I feel so guilty I am afraid almost to look anybody in the eye or to look at myself in a mirror."

"When do these thoughts come on you—mostly?"

"All of the time. When I don't expect them, often they come. They sneak in on me. In school, I'll be paying attention, listening to what's going on, trying to remember the lesson I studied, and before I know it I'm having them. And when I am doing my homework at night, the same thing often happens to me—without the least warning. And whenever I'm walking on the street, Father, and I see a girl, they come, and I look at the girl with my mind harboring immoral thoughts and desires, and I try to think of myself doing, doing immoral things with the girls I see on the street."

"How old are you, my son?"

"Seventeen, Father."

"How often do you receive the Blessed Sacrament?"

"Every week, except these last three weeks. I was afraid to come and go to confession. I stayed away for three weeks. I promised God I would not do this, and I did it. I broke my promise to God."

"Why did you do that?"

"I was afraid, Father, afraid. I was ashamed of myself."

"You must never be ashamed before our Lord, Jesus Christ. He said for us to come unto Him, all of ye who are heavy burdened, and He, He would refresh you. You must go to Him, my boy, because there is no comfort, no surcease, no Grace and purity without Him. And you must confess regularly and receive Absolution for your sins, and the Grace you receive through the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist."

"Yes, Father."

"Most of all, when you have been weak and have sinned, then you must receive the Grace of the Sacraments of God and the Church, my boy. In the state your soul was in, you should not have stayed away from the Sacraments for three weeks."

"Yes, Father. I wanted to go . . . I was a coward."

"You mustn't do that again. You must come to confession, tell your sins to the priest, confess them fully, as you have just done to me. God knows, He knows your innermost thoughts, the most secret sins of all. Confession is your biggest help, your biggest source of Grace. It will set you straight, put your mind at ease, give you renewed courage to fight the temptations and snares of Satan, cleanse your soul, send you back to the war with Satan with the feeling that your soul has been washed white. You must not be too ashamed to confess."

"Yes, Father. And, Father . . . when . . . when I stole the money, the five dollars, from my mother's pocketbook to take a girl out, I spent the money on the girl, and my mother, she blamed my brother, and she thought he did it. I didn't say I took it."

"Why?"

"I wanted to, and I was ashamed, and, brother, when he found out, he wouldn't let me."

"Why?"

"He thought it would hurt my mother and make her unhappy. I tried, and, Father, I couldn't, and he wouldn't let me, and I was ashamed."

"Why?"

"Every time I tried to, my mother would say something, and I wouldn't be able to get around to telling her. She'd talk about something else, and I wouldn't be able to."

"Does she need her money badly?"

"Yes, Father. She works, she has to work as a house servant to help my brother and me."

"Can you repay the money?"

"Not very well, Father. My brother, he's going to do it. He's going to leave the money where she'll find it, and then she'll not think he took it. But, Father, I am afraid he's going to do this by stealing the money from the drugstore where he works."

"Did you ask him not to, try to persuade him, tell him a new sin does not excuse an old sin?"

"Yes, Father, I did."

"Go on, my son."

"He won't pay attention to me."

"Go on, are there any more sins?"

"And, Father," Eddie said in a murmuring, choked voice, "I . . . I've been guilty of the sin of doubt."

"What is the nature of the doubt?"

"I have . . . for several weeks, since my last confession, I've been guilty of . . . doubting, doubting if, if some of the sins that are said to be mortal sins against the Sixth Commandment, are . . . are sins, mortal sins, Father."

"And do you still have these doubts?"

"No, Father."

"How did these doubts arise?"

"Oh . . . talking to my brother. He put these doubts in my head, that is, it seems I had them after I talked with him."

"How old is your brother?"

"Eighteen."

"What did he say that put these doubts in your head?"

"He said . . . he said certain things were . . . were only human, human nature, and he didn't consider them a sin."

"Were you able to answer him, show him his terrible error?"

"I tried to, Father."

"How did you try?"

Eddie paused a moment and then thoughtfully answered:

"I reminded him, reminded him, Father, of things we had both heard, been told in school, told us by the priests in classes in Christian Doctrine, in our lessons. And I tried to tell him, Father, that the priests who teach us, that they are older than we are, that they, they, you give your whole life to this work, to study and knowing, and I asked him who was he to know more than you, than priests?"

"And is that all you said?"

"Well, in general, in a general way, I tried to make him see it that way."

"But, my son, do you know that you must not have faith in priests merely because we're priests? God expects you to be guided by us priests, but He wants more from you. He wants faith in what the priest stands for as His representatives. Faith in God, in His Revelations, His Mercy, His Grace, His Justice, His Love, faith in Him. He expects you to be able to prove this faith, and when you meet doubt, you must stand on His rock of faith and serve as a good example to the doubter. He expects you to defend Him, His Church, His Moral Law, to defend and explain the Ten Commandments which God, the Father, gave to Moses on Mount Sinai."

"Father, I meant to say all that, but . . . but I couldn't think of saying it all."

"You should have. It is the duty of every Catholic to be able to defend his Church, his faith, and its dogma wherever and whenever attacked."

"Yes, Father."

"How seriously did you doubt?"

"Well, Father, I was having some trouble with myself, with temptations to commit sins of the flesh. I kept having immoral thoughts and desires, and it was hard to drive them out of my mind. And so my brother, when he kept saying what I just said, hammering at me, it seemed I found my faith shaken. I was wondering then, wondering, now, would God really cause me to have all of this trouble and to make me burn forever in

the fires of Hell for one mortal sin. And would it hurt Him so much if I committed one sin of thought or desire? I wondered like that, Father, instead of fighting temptations and praying for Grace. But sometimes I found myself wishing that my brother were right, and that I could sin, and I would, feeling this way, Father, I'd let myself get to thinking that maybe, maybe God didn't care so much, and maybe it wasn't a sin."

The priest shook his head and spoke very slowly, enunciating his words clearly in a low voice:

"And, my son, did you not force yourself nor try to make yourself realize that you are put into this world by God in order to be tested, in order to be able to prove yourself worthy of Him, worthy of knowing the joys of Heaven? Of being with God and His saints for all eternity?"

"Yes, Father, I tried, but it was hard, hard to see clearly what it all meant. I fought these doubts, but they came to me again, again and again. They came back to me when I least expected them. I found myself sometimes having them without knowing what was going on in my mind."

"The only cure for doubt, my boy, is prayer, prayer and faith, and visitations to the Blessed Sacrament, regular confessions, strenuous spiritual exercises so that you can ask God to give you the Grace and the fortitude to fight the snares and wiles of the Devil."

"And, Father, maybe my sin is worse because I have been planning to study for the priesthood."

"Are you sure that you have a vocation?"

"I think . . . I think I have."

"And with this feeling you have allowed yourself to give way to doubts and to temptations?"

"Yes, Father," he said humbly in a voice of self debasement and agony. "Except that it wasn't just only doubting."

"What more was it then?"

"I began to feel," he said, his voice strained. "I began to feel, Father, that I wasn't good enough and strong enough to be a priest. Sometimes, when I'd try to not have these thoughts,

I would still have immoral thoughts and doubts, and I would sin by myself or by desire. And then I would think it must be too hard to be a priest, and never, never, Father, I mean to have to be celibate all my life and never know, know, well Father”

His face was hot in the dark and airless confessional.

“My son, I think I understand and can see what it is that’s been causing you all of this spiritual torment.”

“Yes, Father,” Eddie responded eagerly, anxiously. “What?”

“The Devil,” the priest said gently, and then he cleared his throat noisily. “The Devil would naturally make you a special target for his temptations, because he wants you, wants to win your soul away from God, and to destroy in you the vocation which God seems to have planted in your soul, in your heart. You would be literally bombarded with all of the artillery of Satan, and he has many resources with which to destroy virtuous souls if they let him. You must gird yourself, gird yourself! Gird yourself for a battle, my boy, the most terrible battle in the world, and, at the same time, the most wonderful. You must fight the hardest battle a being can fight, the battle with yourself, with the Devil who is trying to enter your heart and to possess it and your soul. You must battle with the weakness in human nature which is in all men because of original sin. My son, you are being tempted, tempted and tempered, and only the Grace of God, only the Grace of God can give you strength. You must do everything that you can to win added strength and Grace for this battle, Grace from God to help you win.”

“Yes, Father, and now I feel, I feel sure that maybe I have a vocation.”

“I can’t say that, but I would think you have. I believe you have a vocation, and that that is why the Devil is so particularly anxious to destroy your soul, to break the bonds of your faith. He wants to win you away from answering the call.”

“Yes, Father,” Eddie said after a moment’s hesitancy. “I’ve always planned to study for the priesthood, and dreamed of when I’d be a priest, dreamed of starting after graduating next

June from school. And, Father, I never had any serious trouble resisting temptation until lately."

"My boy, I can tell you, it's going to be hard, very hard. You must steel your soul, your will power, and fight, fight and be prepared to struggle against all of the wiles and the snares of the canniest enemy of all mankind, the Devil."

"I know, and I want to try, Father."

"And you must avoid all occasions of sin, such as girls and the like, and evil companions. And you should try and have a heart-to-heart talk with your brother. Try to sway him, instead of allowing him to sway you. Grace is, and will be, on your side."

"I'll try, Father."

"And do you have any more sins to confess?"

"No, Father."

"Now then, my boy," the priest said in a very gentle voice, "you must visit the Blessed Sacrament regularly, very regularly, and you should pray, pray constantly. And meditate on God and God's ways and His work, for in that way you put yourself in tune with His Holy and Mysterious Will. That is how you can fight these temptations to sin. That is the road to take to win added Grace. And you need Grace, all of the Grace which God will give you in His Mercy. You must persevere in Grace, in your desire to do His Holy work. For He is evidently calling you, calling you as one of the chosen. So I cannot impress on you too strongly that you have to resist the Devil. The Devil will give you no quarter. Give him none, none. And depend on God. Only He can give you Grace, and you must show spiritual fortitude to earn that Grace. And pray, too, pray for the virtue of humility, for it is pride, pride of mind that sows the evil weeds of doubt, pride of mind and pride of body and sensuality that leads to sin. Doubt and sensuality are the hydra-headed serpent that threatens your soul. You must not ever let yourself have pride in man's puny little intellect. You must pray to be humble. You must pray daily to tell God, '*Not my will but Thine be done.*' Because in that way, in that

way alone, can you fortify yourself from the wiles of the Devil, and the Devil would rather snare your soul than he would that of many another."

"Yes, Father."

"And now for your penance, say ten Hail Marys and ten Our Fathers, and an Act of Contrition."

While Eddie recited the Act of Contrition, the priest mechanically and in mumbling indistinctness pronounced the words of Absolution in Latin, simultaneously making the sign of the Cross in the air with his hands. Eddie spoke slowly, recited with painful sincerity:

"Oh, my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all of my sins because I dread the pains of Hell, and the loss of Heaven, but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, who art all good and deserving of all my love . . ."

The priest finished his mumbling and ritualistic Latin before Eddie. Eddie finished his painful recitation of the Act of Contrition.

"Go and sin no more," the priest said, closing the slot.

Eddie slowly rose, and in a daze he left the confessional. In a daze he knelt in a pew and said his penance. In a daze he left the church.

XII

His suitcase was packed. The last minute at home had arrived.

Eddie looked sad. His face had changed. He was drawn, and on his features there was apparent the first sign of suffering, of that inner suffering of restraint and repression which is the revelation of one's fight with one's own impulses, one's own nature. He looked neither his mother nor his brother in the eye. Art watched him with an amused twinkle, as if by a glance Art was telling Eddie that he knew, knew things about Eddie which no one else did. Art went up to him and put out his hand, shook with Eddie, and said lightly:

"Well, good luck, Eddie, Kid, and I know that you'll come through."

"Thanks," Eddie said self-consciously.

"I'll root for you," Art said.

Their shake was firm. Then Art closed his left fist and affectionately gave Eddie a light tap on the chin. He grinned sympathetically and left.

"I'll be home late, Mother."

She was alone with Eddie. She hugged him to her, kissed him fiercely, and, with her arms around him, he blushed.

"My son, this is the proudest day of my life. All that I did, all that I sacrificed, all that I have gone through has been to see this day," she said with intensity of emotion, straining him to her.

"Mother, I'll try," he finally said.

She released him, looked at him, and tears welled in her eyes.

"Son, let me cry. I want to cry with joy," she said.

He stood over her by the dining-room table, his hands awkwardly at his side.

"Mother, don't cry."

"Son, I cry with joy."

She smiled at him through her tears. Her face shone.

"Mother, I'll try," he said nervously.

"You'll be the saint of God. Oh, that I might live to see the day you are consecrated," she exclaimed with intense passion.

"I have to leave now, Mother," he said.

He embraced her, kissed her cheeks. She held him tightly. Then she relaxed. In tears, she smiled at him again.

He picked up his suitcase, grinned with embarrassment, and moved to the doorway of the room, turned, and said, with a choked voice:

"Good-by, Mother."

"Good-by, Edward."

He left. She stood by the front-room window and watched him go. He looked and waved, and then he walked on slowly, a sad boy with a drawn face, carrying his suitcase as he went

off to the priests at Mary Our Mother to be sent away to their seminary in the East. She watched him walk off along the sidewalk. A girl passed. She beamed, seeing that he didn't turn to look after the girl. She went to the dining room, took out a pair of black rosary beads, knelt with her tear-filled eyes fixed on the statue of the Bleeding Sacred Heart of Jesus, and, in tears, she intoned the rosary.

Lib

I DIDN'T GO to school that morning. I sat by the parlor window and looked out at Washington Park. It was like a picture. It was early May. There was no sun, and the deepened green of the park absorbed all the sorrowing colors of my boy's mood. I sat and stared through frames of trees at the lagoon; it seemed like a smooth surface of dirtied glass. Tears came to my eyes, but I wiped them away and continued to stare out of the window.

About ten-thirty, I called my dog Lib and took her for a walk in the park. She was a shaggy airedale, with a fine pedigree and a long record of illegitimate puppies. I let her run loose instead of leashing her. Lib was sprightly. She ran and scurried, cocking her ears, barking after birds, rolling in the grass, laughing as dogs laugh. I ran with her, had her chase sticks, and sent her through the bushes to find tennis balls. She came out with three balls, one of them almost new. Then I took her over to the lagoon. Lib liked water. On summer days, she used to sneak away from home and go over to the park for a swim. If no one called her back, she would swim all the way across the lagoon. She also chased the sheep, and they'd run, baa-baaing. Lib rounding up the sheep was always a comical sight to me; at the same time, I was always proud of her when she did this. But it didn't appeal to the park cops. However, she had got to know them. She could tell a park policeman at a good distance, and she knew how to avoid them. All the

park flatfoots used to vow that they would kill her on sight. But they never could catch her.

I thought about the things Lib would do. Once, I had taken her swimming over by the muddy waters near the stepping-stones. She had frisked out of the waters and run up to a lady dressed immaculately in white, playfully jumping at her, pawing the spotless dress. When my grandmother went to the store, Lib used to expect her to come back with cakes or liver. If she returned without these, the dog would lie in a corner and refused to go near her. She was not an obedient dog. Whenever I took her out, she ran about wildly, and usually refused to obey any summons until she was fagged out. All the kids in the neighborhood used to kid me about the way I called her. They'd shout at me: "Here, Lib!" In winter, she would pull kids along the ice; but if you took her near thin, dangerous ice, she would smell at the shore line and then shy away.

Nobody in the neighborhood seemed to like Lib. They used to say she was a goofy dog. Our neighbors were always complaining to the real-estate agent. Once the crank next door threw a milk bottle at her. He was living there, and the family renting the apartment had a little girl who was brought up to be afraid of dogs. Whenever she saw Lib or heard the dog bark, she screamed. Now, finally, in order to pacify the neighbors, we were getting rid of Lib. We were sending her to a farm near St. Louis. Lib would like that. She could do all the running she wanted to. She wouldn't be cramped and confined. There would be no flatfoots to chase her. We were sending her away that very day.

I took her over to the lagoon and made her stand up for one of the balls she had found. I threw it well toward the center of the lagoon. She swam out for it and returned, dropping the ball at my feet. I threw it again. She swam for it. I continued this until she seemed to be fagged out. I sat by the bank. I wished the sun were out. I remembered how I used to take her out early in the morning. Then the park would be pleasant. I would go barefooted, and the dew would be cool and wet under my feet. There would be the song of birds and sweet early-

morning odors. Now and then a squirrel would come shyly out of a bush and scramble up a tree. Lib would chase the squirrel. She would chase sparrows, too. Slowly we would go around onto the island. Sometimes I would sit on a bench and watch the dog ramble. The sun would be so warm. An iron-faced Slav would often be in the lagoon, snaring weeds. I would watch him and wish I had hip boots like his. I would think of the country up in Michigan and wish I could take Lib up there. I would sit and watch the dog, the grass, the sunlight, the trees, the sparrows. The sparrows were like noisy old women. Lib seemed to hate them.

I sat by the shore line and watched Lib. She was on all fours, looking at me. I told myself that she was almost human. I stood at the threshold of a mystery. Why did dogs seem so human? It did not occur to me that dogs possess, in a cruder form, a consciousness generally similar to our own, and that they probably or possibly experience, in an unrefined or primitive form, a type of imagery similar to our own. Hence, when they are in contact with human beings for a long time, they should take on some human characteristics. I didn't think of that. I looked at Lib's sad face, with her seemingly melancholy dark eyes, and wished I could talk to her, wished that she could speak to me. I said, "Hello, Lib." I said, "Lib, you're going away; I won't see you any more." I said, "Hello, Lib," and she rose, wagged her tail, cocked her ears, and came close to me. I petted her and rubbed my cheek against her nose. I took some dog biscuit from my pocket and made her stand up and speak for it. Then she sat by herself, held the biscuit between her paws, and chewed it. I watched her. I said, "It's good-by, Lib." Every time I started to cry I wiped the tears away and said, "Yeah, it's so-long, Lib."

When the dog finished the pieces of biscuit, I made her sit up and tossed the ball in the air. She caught it. Lib knew a lot of tricks.

We walked around to the wooded island. I thought about many of the things she had done. Often she would go down into the cellar and kill a rat. She would cart it up on the porch

and wag her tail at us for approval. Sometimes she hid dead rats on the porch. She was a wise dog. She would carry the paper home, too. Or she would play dead dog.

I looked at my watch and saw that it was time to be returning. I said, "Hello there, Lib." I watched her cock her ears. It was fascinating to watch a dog cock its ears. I wished I could do something about it, paint a picture of it, have the dog tell me why it cocked its ears, why it could get so happy. I wasn't happy. I took Lib home.

My father and I took her to the Englewood Express office in a taxicab. Lib had never ridden in an automobile before, and she seemed confused. She kept jumping about and looking out the window. My father sensed that I didn't want to lose the dog. He kept telling me that it would be better for the dog in the country; he said a city was no place for an airedale, and that it wasn't really fair to the dog. I said, "Yes."

At the express office, we crated Lib. She was confused, docile, and trusting. We placed a pan of water, a bone, and a biscuit in the crate. She looked out of the crate and howled. I remembered when Lib first came to us. She had been only a few weeks old, and she had whimpered on that first night. The neighbors had been disturbed. When she had become acclimated, she would run all around the house, searching for slippers. Once she had chewed my grandmother's slippers and had been whipped. After this, she never went into my grandmother's bedroom again. I looked at Lib and wiped away a tear.

"Well, she's set now," my father said.

"Yes," I said.

"Don't take it so hard," he said. "She'll be better off in the country."

"She was a nuisance," I said.

"Yes," he said.

"Take in summer. She shed hair and got it all over the parlor rug, and I never could get the rugs clean," I said.

"I know," he said.

"Good-by, Lib," I said, my voice a little choked.

"Come on. I'll buy you a soda," he said.

"Heck, I won't miss her," I said.

"She's as comfortable as we can make her," he said.

"Yes," I said.

"The train don't leave until five," he said.

"Gee, she'll be in the cage a long time," I said.

"I'll tip one of the men around here to be sure they feed and watch her," he said.

I looked at Lib. I patted her head. She stopped moaning. She looked at me. Her face seemed so trusting. We left her. I looked back at Lib. She was watching me and she seemed bewildered. "Good-by, Lib," I said.

"What kind of soda do you want?" my father asked.

"I don't care," I said.

"We'll go to the ball game," he said.

I didn't answer. I thought that Lib would be in a cage all night. I noticed there wasn't any sun out. We walked down to a drugstore on Sixty-third Street. But I didn't want any soda.

When Boyhood Dreams Come True

I

—It was we two and the rest of the world. It was Peg and I and the rest of the world.

THE SOLDIER STOOD in a corner of a small, dim bar on East Fifty-seventh Street drinking beer. He didn't want to do anything but drink, drink, and think of the past. He was medium-sized and thin, light-haired, almost handsome. He looked soldierly in his uniform. He was a man of thirty-eight, gray-ing around the temples, and his sideburns were streaked with gray. His blue eyes seemed glazed, and there were small pouches under them. He was just beginning to lose his appearance of youthfulness.

"Another," he called to the gray-haired bartender.

He turned and looked idly out at the street. Half the window was blackened and opaque. Above this he could see the head of a man or a woman passing by. Fifty-seventh Street was dimmed out, and in his present mood it seemed dismal and dreary. This, this might be his final impression of America. He knew he was going overseas soon. He did not want to think of it. He might not come back. He might be shot dead rushing out of a landing boat. He gulped down his beer and ordered another. Music came from a juke box. Men were talking near him at the bar. Some of them were drunk. He took another gulp of his beer. He wanted to drink and he wanted the night never to end. It had suddenly become so noisy in the bar that he could hardly think, and with this noise of the loud swing music, the boasts, the shouts, the arguments of drunken

and half-drunken people bursting in on his mind, he told himself again:

—*It was Peg and I and the rest of the world.*

He laughed to himself and his expression became ironical. He grimaced, and his face looked mean, nasty. He had thought he was going overseas to fight for Peg, to fight for this, to fight for home and country. He was glad that he was. In fact, he often told himself with what impressed him as sincere conviction that he didn't care whether or not he came back. He would like to be a hero, to die heroically, or else to come back as the Sergeant York of this war. If he became a hero, he would redeem himself. He had never thought out for just what he would redeem himself. He took another swig of beer and remembered that a few moments ago he had turned around and seen the head of an attractive woman. He wished he had gone after her. After all, this might be his last free night in America. Get drunk, get a jane! What else could he do? What else did he want to do?

—*Blue and brokenhearted . . .*

Someone had put a nickel in the juke box, and he heard the words of the song, one of the songs of his youth, of the dances of those days in Chicago, of himself and Peg and the rest of the world. Sun burst into the beer-fogged landscape of his consciousness.

Again he grimaced, and he looked mean. Then his face softened. It became a weak face. His eyes were watery not because he was on the verge of tears but because he had drunk so much beer.

Often, during these last few years when he had been in the Army, he had tried to think of the past. He could only remember it in snatches, and then it was with regrets. Quickly his memories would turn to sexual fantasies, and he would wish he had made some girl or that he had slept with some other girl more often than he actually had. He had lived these years as a soldier with the past ever present in his mind. He had felt

that somehow he was going to restore it. Somehow he would recover more of the past and perhaps, in this recovery, he would lose his bitterness.

—*Blue because we're parted . . .*

The words became almost unbearably sad. So much time could not have passed. He could not be where he was at this moment, be going where he was soon going. Trying to look at himself with the feelings of those days, the days of this song, who would ever have thought that he would be a soldier? As a kid, during the last war, he had dug trenches in Chicago prairies, played soldier, seen movies of war and soldiers, dreamed of himself going to war against Kaiser Bill and returning as a hero. Now, the only dream of his childhood that might really come true was this one. All the others? He grimaced again. He swigged the rest of his glass of beer, walked with a slight stagger to the cigarette machine, and after some difficulties managed to get out a package of Pall Mall cigarettes. He tore off the cellophane and let the pennies drop to the floor without bothering to retrieve them. Lighting a cigarette, he returned to his place in the corner, shoved the empty glass across the bar, and nodded to the bartender for another drink.

—*There was a time I was melancholy . . .*

That goddamn, goddamn, goddamned song.

"And you say you don't believe in God?" yelled a drunken man; he was big, plump, black-haired; he turned to a tall, thin man with gray hair and a gray mustache.

"Why should I?" the thin man answered in a drunken voice.

"And your name is Clancy?" the corpulent one asked.

"I'm not bragging about it. The Irish are no good on earth."

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Aren't you afraid? What would your poor old mother say?"

"Hanrahan, all of you damned Irish walk around afraid of your shadows. That's what God does to you. Pat, give me another. And give this superstitious so-and-such a drink."

"I'll buy. No atheist is treating me to drinks," Hanrahan shouted.

"All right. This God-bitten, God-bitten . . ." Clancy seemed to search for a word but couldn't think of one. He added, "He'll buy. Maybe it will be a form of penance."

"Soldier, have one?" Clancy called.

Tom Finnegan nodded that he would.

"What's your name?" Clancy asked.

"Finnegan."

"Finnegan. Why, Finnegan, glad to know you. Come on over here and join us."

He moved over.

"This bastard's name is Clancy, and he's an atheist."

Tom didn't care.

"Clancy, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Look at this lad, my friend, Finnegan. He's going out to fight for you, you, a dirty atheist."

"Are you a Christian warrior?" Clancy asked.

"I was drafted," Tom said.

"Thanks for the drink, Hanrahan, and I hope it saves you from suffering in purgatory," Clancy said.

"Don't talk of holy things in a place like this," Hanrahan said angrily.

"You're doing that. Getting drunk to preach about God in a saloon, that's a fine religious feeling you display."

"Do you hear this bastard? He's worse than a Jew or a German," Hanrahan said.

But Tom didn't care. He took a drink.

"Every man to his own opinion," Tom said.

—*Blue*. . . .

Someone had played the song again, but he didn't catch more than this word because of the loud, drunken talk. He looked glumly into his beer. Clancy and Hanrahan yelled at each other.

"All right, gentlemen," the bartender intervened.

"Pat, you go to church, don't you?" Hanrahan appealed to him.

"Yes, but I'm not there now. What others believe is no business of mine."

"Would you allow a drunken fool to deny God in your presence?"

"You two are at it every Saturday night. Kiss and make up," Pat said, laughing at them toothlessly.

"Where you from?" Hanrahan asked Tom after having gone through his weekly rupture of all friendship with Clancy.

"Chicago."

"It's a big town, isn't it?"

Tom nodded.

"I guess if I wasn't for little old New York, that's the town I'd like to live in. You got one advantage over us in Chicago. We got more mockies. But after this war is over, after you boys turn the trick, the mockies won't have nothing to say in New York, no, nor any place else, either. I ain't got no use for Hitler, but I got to say the one good thing he done was put the mockies in their place."

"Hanrahan, why don't you go home to your wife?" Pat asked.

"He's afraid to," Clancy said half under his breath.

A woman in evening clothes staggered into the bar.

"Scotch, Pat," she said.

Tom studied her. Rather young, pretty, dressed up in expensive clothes. He always was more attracted to well-dressed women. Clothes, the social position they suggested, added a lure and mystery to them. Although he had had enough experience in life to realize that because a woman was clothed expensively and stylishly it didn't mean she would be better in a bed than one who wasn't, his eyes always lit up with the gleam of the hunt at the sight of a well-dressed, good-looking woman.

The woman laughed half aloud to herself while Tom watched her.

"Finnegan, tell him, tell him what you think of him. You're a soldier and an Irishman," Hanrahan said.

Hanrahan shoved a fresh beer before Tom, who was staring at the woman, and he pulled at the soldier's sleeve.

"Finnegan, here's another. God knows, I'll always be proud to buy a beer for a soldier. But tell him, tell him what you think," Hanrahan said, his eyes bleary from drink.

Clancy started cursing, and both Pat and Hanrahan warned him that a lady was present.

"Don't mind me. I can do better than that," the woman laughed.

"Miss, let me buy you a drink," Hanrahan said.

"I have one, and I am Mrs. Mrs. twice over."

"Hanrahan, you're a fine-looking Romeo. A war Romeo," Clancy said.

Tom smiled at her.

"Lonesome, Soldier?" the woman asked.

"Not any more," he said, sidling over to her.

Hanrahan looked at him, bleary eyed and wistful.

"I'm never lonesome," she said.

"No?" Tom asked, growing eager.

"Not with this," she said, lifting her half-drunk glass, spilling some down her chin as she drank.

"It's a good friend, all right," Tom said, feeling within himself old feelings of his youth, when he had believed himself so attractive to girls.

He tried to speak in a soft and modulated voice, but his tongue was a little thick. He drank some beer.

People came and went, and the bar was continually noisy. Tom bought her a drink. Clancy left, almost falling on his face as he went out the door.

"He's no good," Hanrahan said, and then he got to shouting and singing with a group of drunks.

"It's rather noisy here," Tom said, stressing the *rather*; it was a word that seemed to him to mark him off, give him tone, quality, and he hoped the way he had stressed it would impress her.

"Sometimes I like noise."

"Well, I'll be going into a lot of noise," Tom said.

"Are you afraid?" she asked.

"I can't wait."

"Soldier, what is the meaning of life?" she asked, finishing her drink.

"That's a rather big question. Suppose we have another drink."

"All right—but I'm buying it."

"Oh, no, after all, the honor of the Army is at stake."

"Pat, fill us up. Soldier, Soldier, listen to me! Listen to me!"

"I'm all ears. My ears are radar," he said.

"All right, Radar—listen to a woman of the world."

"I am," he grinned.

"The age of chivalry is with O'Leary in the grave," she said bitterly.

He grinned. He didn't have a lot of money.

"And, besides, I got to spend my alimony money someway. Spend on my country," she said.

She was rich, a swell dame, and she had said she had been married. And she was drunk. And this might be his last night in America. Some of the boys from the old days in Chicago ought to see him now. Picking up a dame who was treating him like this and . . .

"Let's go where it isn't so noisy," he suggested.

"Finish up."

He hurriedly downed the beer she had bought him.

He waited. She looked into her drink.

"Finish up. The age of chivalry is past."

She took a gulp and smiled at him grimly.

"Let's get some air."

"Radar, you don't want air," she said.

He was taken aback, and a sharp retort was on the tip of his tongue.

"And neither do I," she said, pursing her lips and blowing him a kiss.

He winked at her, feeling devilishly attractive.

She took his arm, and they staggered out of the place.

"Well, now you got your air, Soldier."

"Yes, it's a wonderful night."

He put his arm around her.

"Wait," she said.

He stopped. She flung her arms around him and kissed him.

"Come on," she told him.

"Where?"

She took his arm.

"Follow me."

She led him into the entranceway to a large apartment house on Fifty-seventh Street. A doorman bowed to her but at the same time looked at her with eyes of condemnation. Tom rode up to one of the upper floors with her, where she led him to a door, opened it, and switched on the light. He saw that he was in a large apartment with new and expensive modern furniture.

II

Tom was sober and haggard. His eyes were more pouchy than they had seemed last night in the saloon, before he had met this woman. Tired as he was, he didn't feel like going to sleep in his room at the Commodore. He wanted to think, and he wanted to remember, and he didn't know how to think or to remember. After having left her, excusing himself by saying he had to go, he had come here to this little park at the end of Fifty-seventh Street and now he was standing by the railing, looking out. The river was covered with mist. The island directly across from him, and the huge steel bridge to his left, were lost in the morning swirls of gray fog and mist through which the sun was trying to break. It was very quiet, but suddenly the stillness of the cool early morning was broken by a loud, wailing horn on the river. It pierced to the core of his being, becoming a lonely cry, the echo of all the lonely cries stifled within him. He lit a cigarette and looked vaguely

down at the moving river, seeing nothing, and then he sat on a bench on the side of the park. It was a square park, the ground covered with cement, and to his left he saw a place for children to play in the sand. He was alone in it. There were scattered bits of paper on the benches and on the cement, bespeaking the presence of last night's lovers. He thought that he had been a last night's lover himself.

He had left her feeling ashamed, and yet in his shame he had also felt pride. She was a bitch.

What a bitch! he thought.

Yet there was admiration for her in his contempt. How often of late hadn't he wanted just such a night of love-making, wanting it just that wild, just that uninhibited, and wanted nothing but that. Now, accidentally, while half drunk, he had stumbled into it, and here he was. Yes, he felt a little of the taste of ashes in the mouth.

What was it all about? What was life all about? He might never find out now. Where had he gone in life? Where was he going? Things had not worked out as he had expected them to, and he had so little to which to look forward. When he came back, if he did, what would it be like? What would there be for him? These were the last, best years of his life, and maybe the last.

He went and stood by the railing again. He heard the fog-horn growing louder and gazed to his right. He saw a shape looming large and moving forward in the clearing mist. He watched, his attention focused on it. It was like something from a world other than this everyday one in which he was standing, this moving object which slowly grew before his eyes into a large, gray boat as it was eased forward by tugs. Its deck was crowded with soldiers whom he could see only dimly because the sun, which had not fully come out, had not completely cleared the mist. He heard a cheer. He waved but guessed they probably couldn't see him. They were going where he was going very soon. How many of them, and what were they going from, and to what were they going, and how

many of them were coming back, and when was he going, and when was he coming back?

He watched the boat passing under the bridge. He heard a wailing cry of the foghorn, and then another, and then another, a lonely, far-off wail, a wail full of sad romance, of strange, foreign life. The boat slipped into a cloud of sunny mist. It was no longer a boat. It was a moving, diminishing shadow in a cloud, and then it was merely that wailing foghorn. He turned and sat down again.

He had told this woman something of his past. His divorce. She had been divorced twice, and she had been very bitter. He was not bitter. He was confused. He had forgotten Peg for periods. Of late, the realization that he was leaving, perhaps never to return, seemed to have brought the past back to him.

What had she said?

—Who wants to stay married?

Had her husband, husbands, grown tired of her as he had of Peg?

—Radar, I've slept with so many men I can't remember them all.

—Will you remember me?

—Once more, Radar. Make this the memorable time of my life, Radar. Oh, God, hurry up, come on, Radar.

He had thrown himself into a mood, a frantic mood that was fake. Yes, fake!

So here we are, Even Stephen, he thought.

—*Blue and brokenhearted,*

Blue because we're parted.

There was a time I was jolly,

You know the reason I'm melancholy.

Blue and, oh, so lonely,

True, I love you only. . . .

His memory snagged, and he stood looking into the river with mouth open, trying to remember the song, trying, in doing so, to remember the past.

—*Because you're blue, too . . .*

The words became an obsessive refrain, filtering through his mind again and again.

He walked away, left the park, and walked west on Fifty-seventh Street, haggard, listless, smoking a cigarette. The morning was fresh and cool, and a soft wind blew at his back. He passed the building where she lived and wished he had stayed with her. If he had slept, he would have waked up, and maybe the next time, the next time would have been the time he would never forget.

He walked on listlessly, his mind growing dull, words of the song continuing to obsess him. He tried to think of his past. Again he thought of sun.

He got in a cab and was driven to his hotel on Forty-second Street. He piled into bed, hoping to dream of the past, to dream of Peg, to dream of his hopes of his youth in Chicago, as if they still could be realized.

III

The sun was shining on Michigan Avenue, and in bewilderment he walked along it, past the Art Institute, but on the opposite side of the street, seeking to discover why he was here.

Here I am, step right up and call me Speedy, here I am, he told himself in a mood of inexpressible joy.

He was happy. Happy Days are here again, here again, here again, and, naked, he danced along Michigan Avenue, but the people passed him, as if they didn't even notice he was dancing nakedly on the street, and then he was dancing with dark-haired, pretty Peg, and she wore a long black dress, and he wore nothing, and they stopped traffic and, to the tune of blaring motor horns, they danced a long, slow fox trot.

He remembered a line of one of the old songs.

—I could just keep right on dancing forever, dear, with you.

He danced, tilting his nose at a proud, conceited angle, and he thought they were being watched and admired and that he was being envied.

—I'm dancing on air, Peg, he said.

—I love you, she said.

She seemed so vivid to him, sitting on a park bench. His arm was around her, and she cuddled up against him, and then she looked at him with staring, childish blue eyes, so big they seemed, and there was something so lovable, so young and fresh in them, and he thought he was such a sonofabitch to think of destroying the innocence of the girl with these childish, childlike eyes.

—Make me happy, she said.

—You always say that, he said, thinking how he knew the way to make her happy.

—I always want you to. Make me happy.

And he took her in his arms and bent forward to kiss her. A terrible pang of guilt saddened him. He was walking after her, and she was fading, floating away on the wings of an angel, fading, floating, flying on white wings just beyond his reach along a dark cavern, and he walked after her, hurrying, increasing his pace, running, running but with no sense of motion, running as if he were floating and flying on air, or dancing with no sense of dancing, and there she was, still ahead of him, and he ran alone, ran toward an opening as if he were lost in a cave in an unknown place, and he ran, ran on, the opening still seemingly ahead of him. He was reaching it, and then it was a small outlet, revealing the sunshine of the world, and it was far away, and he was running toward it.

He peeped up out of a foxhole in France, and he didn't know how he had got here, and ahead of him he saw a German soldier bearing down on him, growing bigger and bigger, until suddenly the soldier was leaping into the foxhole with pointed bayonet, and he knew he was going to die. He was limp, unable to defend himself, and the face of the soldier was clear, a sweaty mustached face with green eyes. With pointed bayo-

net, the Nazi soldier came at him in the foxhole, moving as if in a slow-motion film.

He watched, transfixed, trapped in indecision, asking himself what he would do and thinking it was the end.

And he suddenly realized that he was a boy playing war in a trench in a vaguely familiar prairie, wrestling with Kip O'Connor, and each of them was yelling:

—You're the Hun.

He walked away, a boy, thinking himself a hero in the war, and with medals on his chest he was a one-man parade marching down Michigan Avenue to the playing bands, and a crowd watched him, cheering the hero of the war who had killed Kaiser Adolph Wilhelm.

In the midst of his dream of glory and heroism, Tom let loose a series of beery snores and, stirring and tossing in the hotel bed, he heard thunderous noises in the darkness of his head. He was momentarily aware of only noise and darkness and terrible fear, but the roars he seemed to hear carried menace to him, and, vaguely aware of war and death, he puzzled to find out how they were related to him. The roars seemed to persist for a very long time, and they coursed through his mind like something unseen, moving, moving through darkness which itself seemed to move in a series of involutions and waves, as if the blackness he perceived were like some sea on which the waves were rolling. He had a sense of himself, unseen, moving through this darkness, and yet he saw nothing but oppressive darkness. He had to know, to know what had happened to him, what this noise and darkness meant, and how it was related to the war he had gone to fight in. He realized that the war had ended, but didn't know how. And at the same time he realized that many things had ended. Then, hearing these roars grow dimmer, as if they were dying out, and seeing the blackness in his dream vision swirl, as if it were a curtain being turned and pushed, preliminary to its being unfurled, he came to understand what it was that had puzzled him. His understanding came without warning. Suddenly, as the noises seemed to die off into a silence as terrifying as the

noises had been, he understood that he had been killed in the war and that the world had ended.

He was calm, and he walked through dimness, a gray and black dimness which was in front of him and to both sides of him, so that there were no forms, no shapes, no objects in his vision, but he was walking, walking, and he now came to understand where he was going. He was walking through the corridors of Eternity. But where was Hell, and how had it been that he had died, died long long ago, and had not seen God, had not been judged, had not gone to Heaven, to Hell, to Purgatory? Where had he gone? He remembered that something had happened to him, but what was it? What? It seemed as if his remembrances were like movements stirring in the back of his skull—memories pressing and pushing and stirring along grooves inside his head.

It's all over but the shouting, he told himself.

And at the same time the darkness was gone, and he walked on a wide plain. The far horizon of the wide plain seemed near him, and as he walked it came nearer. The plain was so small, and how could it be that it could be so small, when he was in the other world, and back in the world where he had died in war, look at how big it had been, how big a world.

It's all over but the shouting, he told himself.

Anxiously, he walked on. He was in a state of calm uncertainty, not knowing how he could be so calm. For he knew that he was walking, walking to meet his God and to know his fate.

Now, everybody will know the works, he thought.

His uncertainty turned to shame. No one had been as lousy as he had been, and now all the world, all those who had ever lived, would know every shame of his.

Peg would know that when he was fifteen he had been onanistic.

—Whip the dummy! Whip the dummy! he said aloud, over and over again.

And he wore a soldier's uniform, and he knew that he had

been killed in France in this uniform. He marched, left right, left right, proud of himself, and he began to sing

—*They were all out of step but Tom . . .*

Out of step, and he marched, and he was out of step with eternity, all out of step but Tom, Tom out of step, out of step, out of step on the Plains of Eternity, marching, marching, Tommy comes marching home again to Hell.

But why was he not more afraid? In the other world, had he not so often been terrified because of the fears of Hell, and here he was calmly marching out of step.

A man with a gray mustache faced him; he had a belt around his middle on which there were strung bottles of whisky. Tom looked into the leering eyes of this man, searching for a name in those eyes.

—Finnegan? asked the gray-haired man with a belt of whisky bottles.

He was going to answer that he was Finnegan, but the man interrupted him.

—The Archangel Clancy.

Now Clancy's face was clear to him. He had seen this face in the other world; somewhere, somehow he had seen this face, yes, he had seen this face.

—So this is the Archangel Clancy, he reflected.

He had expected to meet him.

—Finnegan, are you ready?

—Yes.

He wasn't. He had lied. Was it not enough to have lied, whored, cheated, and been no good on earth without lying in Eternity, when he met the Archangel Clancy.

—Well, here, old man, brace up, brace up. Take a snorter to lift your spirits. The worst is yet to come, the Archangel Clancy said, pulling a whisky bottle off his belt. Drink up, take a shot, and get yourself set for the shenanigans.

And Clancy took the bottle and drank himself.

—Like that drink? asked the Archangel Clancy.

—Yes.

—Have another.

And the Archangel had another.

—Whenever you meet your fate, there's nothing like a snorter, the Archangel said, and Tom looked at him in bewilderment.

This was all new. Eternity was new, just as life had once been new, and he waited to get the lowdown on Eternity, but Clancy said nothing.

And then Tom found himself alone in a huge place that looked like White City in Chicago a long time ago, and he walked around. People passed him, all of them with familiar faces.

—You don't know me, a medium-sized, broad-shouldered fellow said, walking beside him.

—I don't.

—Lonigan. Studs Lonigan. Once met you in Chicago.

—Oh, South Side.

—Wish I was there. Hell, I spent all this time in Heaven.

—What's it like?

—Going there?

—I don't know.

—Don't. Go to Hell.

Tom was bewildered.

—But . . .

He said no more. He had no more to say.

—I wanted to be there in Hell. There's one dirty sonof-a-bitch there I'm laying for. His name's O'Neill. The four-eyed bastard wrote a book about me. Every word of it's a lie.

—Danny O'Neill.

—Know him?

—Yes. He was an elephant trying to be a butterfly.

—He went to Hell. How the Hell he got there I don't know.

—Where's my wife?

—How should I know? Studs Lonigan said, disappearing, and after he was lost in a crowd Tom heard him call:

—See you in Hell—like Hell.

Tom knew where he was. This was the Carnival of the Day

of Judgment, but he had never learned from his catechism that it was called the Carnival, and yet this was no surprise to him.

He found himself in a large crowd, but everyone walked slowly, and many faces were familiar, but he didn't know who the people were with these familiar faces, and he dared not look at them, and he walked with lowered head, afraid that unless he could remember their names he would embarrass them, and that wasn't done on earth or in Eternity. They all marched like soldiers, and M.P.'s with phallus-shaped clubs stood watching them outside of picket ropes. Tom came to a street in the carnival park, and a Chicago policeman put a hand up and said:

—Stop.

In the distance he heard what seemed to be the voices of a choir, singing to organ music, as if in church, but he could not hear the words, and then he heard, in slow and solemn singing:

—*St. Louis woman with your diamond . . .*

And he found himself standing with others, watching a naked woman in the center of a sandy circle, dancing and wiggling the way he had seen girls in burlesque shows. It was Peg, his wife.

—She's going to Hell, someone beside him said.

—I sent her there, he said.

He watched her, appalled at the familiar movements of her body, thinking how she had come to him pure, and then, after marriage with him, there she was, the Scandal of all Eternity.

—Who is she? someone asked.

—Peggy Finnegan. She took on everybody in Hell from eight to eighty.

Tom now began to realize that this was no joke. It was all deceptive, this Carnival. It was the Judgment Day, and soon everything would be starting. And now here he was watching Peggy Finnegan, the Scandal of all Eternity.

He walked off. He wanted to be alone to think.

—Have a drink and brace yourself, the Archangel Clancy said, suddenly appearing before him and offering a drink.

—Like that snorter? the Archangel Clancy asked him.

Tom looked at him in bewilderment.

—Have another.

And the Archangel Clancy took another drink.

—Where am I?

—You'll be in Hell soon.

And he found himself sitting alone by a bench, reading a newspaper, and he read in a gossip column:

Peggy Finnegan, Scandal of All Eternity, Sensation in Hell. Peggy Finnegan, ex-Mrs. Tom Finnegan of World War Two Finnegan was so hot that she made the flames of Hell seem like the North Pole. The customers said that after seeing her they never wanted to go to Heaven. The girl from Hell with the Heavenly Hips.

And suddenly a stranger appeared before him and asked:

—Finnegan?

—I'm Finnegan.

He was suddenly facing a cheering crowd. He stood before a microphone.

—Ladies and gentlemen of Eternity, I have just found him. As I said in my column, *The Looking Glass of Eternity*, I would be the one to find him. Just as I always kept my word below on the earth, so I do now. Here he is. I found him, and, ladies and gentlemen, don't forget to use your Burglar Asbestos Hand Protection in Hell. Buy it at the Burglar's Booth before you see Number One. And now, ladies and gentlemen of Eternity, let's go to press. This is Wenshel Wonder. Let's go to press, and here we are with Tom Finnegan.

—Flash!

Flash, flash, flash, Eternity speaking.

—Tom Finnegan is the man who ruined the lovely Peggy Finnegan. He found her a pure, sweet girl in the virtuous city of Chicago and married her. That was the end of Peggy's you know what sent you all to Hell. So now, here is Tom Finnegan.

There was applause.

—Tell us the secret.

—Tell us.

—How'd you do it?

—Oh, you! a girl yelled at him.

—Step right up, Tom, don't be bashful. You've got the audience of the biggest sinners in human history lapping it up from you. They've been waiting here since this morning, waiting for me to find you under the auspices of Burglar's Asbestos to tell 'em your secret. How did you do it?

—Ladies and gentleman, I am not accustomed to public speaking, but I'm sorry, I'm heartily sorry.

—Modest. Friends and fellow sinners, the boy's modest.

There was raucous laughter.

Tom looked at them in bewilderment. They were laughing and cheering. Yes, they were cheering him for having ruined his wife. He was going to Hell.

—And here's a treat, friends. The lovely Peggy Finnegan herself, the hottest girl in Eternity. Peggy Finnegan, she's hotter than Hell. Here she is, and not a strip on. Now, aren't you sorry you were good? You won't find anything like Peggy up there with Number One.

And the crowd cheered Peggy. There she was. He remembered her this way, remembered before they were married, and she was smiling to them with that girlish innocence that had so charmed him.

Everyone was gay and happy but Tom. Tom looked at her sadly. He was filled with a nostalgia for the earth that he had left forever, and he sighed to himself, wanting to start all over again.

—Too late, too late, too late, he said.

—Sinners and liars, he's drooling.

—Oh, boy, oh, boy, under the auspices of Asbestos Hand Protectors, I can say that Tom Finnegan is certainly pulling our leg. Sinners and liars, look at him.

—Quit faking, you're no good, Peggy said to him.

—Peggy, I'm sorry I made you cry, he said.

—Where's Finnegan? someone cried.

There was a commotion in the crowd, and suddenly Peggy's

mother and a crowd of mothers came marching up to him with battle-axes.

—Where is the devil, the ruiner of my daughter? Finnegan's mother-in-law screamed.

Tom saw the marching mothers coming with pickaxes.

He realized why they wanted him.

—He ruined a hundred thousand girls and Peggy Finnegan, the announcer shouted.

—One hundred thousand virgins sent to Hell by Finnegan.

—And me, Peggy Finnegan said, suddenly appearing in a soldier's uniform at the head of the marching mothers with battle-axes, all of them in military formation.

But they can't hurt me. I'm dead already, Tom thought.

And, trembling and quivering with fear, he suddenly ran. He ran past booths, and crowds, soldiers, military policemen; and behind him was the marching army of battle-axed mothers, all of them looking like Mrs. Finnegan.

—Stop, seducer! they cried.

No matter how fast he ran, they kept up their slow, steady marching in formation. Despairing, fearful that he couldn't escape, he ran, and they marched after him, and he ran faster and faster.

And suddenly he had escaped them, and he stood in a crowded hall, and he wore a Nazi uniform, and he had a little mustache, and the crowd rose and gave a stiff-armed salute, and shouted:

—Heil, Finnegan.

—Heil, Finnegan, Finnegan said.

The crowd sat down.

—Glorious rapists, he shouted.

The crowd jumped up, gave the salute, and yelled:

—Heil, Finnegan.

—Heil, Finnegan, Finnegan said.

—Mighty masturbators, Finnegan said.

The crowd jumped up again and heiled him, and he heiled himself.

—Inexhaustible screwballs, he orated.

Again they heiled him, and again he heiled himself.

—We are gathered here, he orated . . .

Again they heiled.

—We are gathered here . . .

Again they heiled.

—We are gathered here . . .

Again they heiled.

—We are gathered here to form the party of maidenhead robbers.

Again they heiled.

—Now, forward march. Not one maiden over six can enter Eternity, he said.

He led them, naked, in military formation, toward the marching mothers with battle-axes. Slowly, steadily, to jazz music, they marched, two armies to meet each other. Suddenly both armies started jitterbugging, and the mothers, as scantily clad as chorus girls, wildly flung themselves into the arms of the soldiers of Finnegan's army, and Finnegan stood by, watching the wild carnage, and he said to reporters gathered around him:

—I have won the war.

And then Finnegan was alone. He walked through ashes, dragging chains. He realized that he was dressed in black.

—Forgive them, for they know not what they do, he said.

—Forgive me, for I know I know what I do, he prayed, and he fell on his knees and looked upward, lifted up his hands to the empty sky, and then he beat his chest.

He rose and, carrying a trunk full of the burdens of his sins, he walked with bent back on and on across ashes, not knowing where he was going, and suddenly he knew that he was back at the Carnival of Eternity, walking by booths and then the roller-coaster entrance, and he was dressed in black, carrying the trunk full of sins on his back, while on either side people were lined up to watch him with silent and scornful disapproval.

—There goes Finnegan with not one friend in Eternity, he heard them say.

He winced with shame and dared not look either to right or left, and at the end of the path he saw Peggy, dressed like a glamour girl. He walked up to her, dropped his trunk full of sins, and bowed. She looked at him with icy coldness.

—Forgive me.

—It was your fault.

—Forgive me, he begged.

—Go to Hell, she said.

He groveled in the dust, and heard singing and dancing behind him, and he continued to grovel.

—Only a man could have saved me, and I got Finnegan, Peggy said in a lewd voice while he continued to grovel.

—She wanted a man, Finnegan, a voice called out, and Finnegan realized he was being laughed at.

It became inexplicably clear to him that he was being prepared for Eternity. He was being exposed, laughed at. But this was not what he had expected. He was ashamed, hurt, the butt of jokes, and he sensed that all through the Carnival of the White City of Judgment, he was being laughed at.

He ran away.

—There goes Finnegan, the laughing stock of Eternity, a voice called out.

He ran and he ran, but there was no place to run to. Wherever he ran, there was no place to hide, and there were laughing, jeering faces.

He paused. He stood alone. People passed him, strange persons, familiar ones, naked ones, and well-dressed ones, and he gazed anxiously, hungrily from face to face, and no one spoke to him.

—Finnegan, the laughing stock of Eternity.

—Who said it?

—Everyone said it. The whole world said it.

And suddenly he was standing on a small platform, and his wife stood facing the crowd. Behind him was a tent.

—Free show. Free show for the girls. Finnegan for nothing. Who'll step right up and take him. Finnegan for nothing.

A fear overcame him, a fear that no one, no girl would even want him gratis.

He looked out, and most of those in the crowd were naked young girls. What was it on their faces? Nothing, and yet something; nothing, cold faces, cold faces of scorn.

—Ten cents to the *femme* who takes him. Ten cents cold, hard cash in counterfeit money. Counterfeit money for counterfeit Finnegan. Come on girls, give the boy a chance.

—He ought to have ants in the pants. That's all he can have, a girl's voice called, and Finnegan was sadly puzzled.

He had not been so scorned in life.

—Let me go, he cried.

—He's afraid. Girls, I know him. He's afraid to give himself.

And the phrase troubled and stirred his sleeping memories. He realized that when he and Peg had married, he had said to her that she should give herself, and she had been fearful. He saw the laughing, naked girls before him, and his wife on the platform, and he remembered that he had said this to her, and he wished he were back again in the life of the world, back with Peg on the first night of their marriage.

And he was dead, and life was ended. His sadness deepened, and the very air seemed to darken with it. There was nothing left now, and all was over, all was over. There was nothing left but shame and suffering.

—Am I in Hell yet? he asked.

And no one answered him.

—If a girl takes Finnegan, she can have a real man free, Peg Finnegan barked, and he looked in shame, and not a girl moved, not a face changed.

Critical and sneering female eyes focused on him strangely, and he realized again that all was over, life was ended, and there was nothing left, nothing but shame and suffering, and he walked alone, alone in nowhere, carrying with him the sadness of remembered and unremembered shames. Even in memory all of life had dwindled to the knowledge he bore of sin and shame. He walked on and on in nowhere, going nowhere, but conscious that beyond the nothingness through which he

walked there was a somewhere, a somewhere with people and laughing girls and happiness, and there, amid happiness, Finnegan was a name of scorn. Laughing girls and happy people all talked of him. He cringed.

Always, yes, always, in the world, always back in Chicago far, far away and long, long ago, he had been like this, afraid, afraid of others, afraid that they wouldn't think highly of him, and now he was the same in Eternity, and here he was, Finnegan, walking nowhere, going nowhere, all alone, so alone with no one to love him.

He suddenly understood that he was walking forty days in the wilderness of nowhere. He yearned to be tempted. But it was too late. Now there were neither tempters nor temptresses. The books of life were closed. And Finnegan was nowhere, and perhaps nowhere was the initiation for Hell. Loneliness as unassuageable as a thirst almost brought tears to his eyes. He was even unmanly. He wanted to cry. He walked and walked.

A beautiful, naked girl stood before him, and he remembered her as the girl from Fifty-seventh Street in New York.

—I've been waiting for you.

He looked at her with tears in his eyes. He would not touch her.

—Are you Eve?

—Yes, Adam.

—Didn't you do enough to me and all my heirs?

—I'm worth it.

—You bitch.

—I'm the bitch that ruined the world.

—Bragging of it, too.

—You liked me once.

—And look at me now.

—Forget it. You only live once.

—And I lived.

—You didn't. You breathed.

—What is the purpose of it?

She smiled lasciviously and said, you know.

Perhaps it was not too late. Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps.
The word chorused sadly through his head.

—Good boy, she sneered.

He had wanted to be good.

—I don't know, he said.

—What's it all about? she asked.

—Tell me.

—I did. Love.

—What is love?

—All a woman wants.

—What is life?

—Something that was. Finnegan, you're dead.

He was dead. If he resisted sin now, what good would it do him?

—Where is Hell?

—Hell is a bed.

—Where?

—Sleep in it.

—He did. He made me sleep in it, Peg said, coming upon them.

Her face was old and wrinkled.

—I was young and pretty once, she said.

—Are you dead, too? he asked.

Neither answered him, and he walked across the sky, right up to the shining, silver moon.

The moon was a stage in a musical comedy.

—What are you, moon? he asked.

And a man and woman stood on the moon, like singers in the center of the stage, and sang:

—*Blue moon . . .*

The song told him nothing. He had waited to die to find out what life was, and now he was on the moon that he had looked at from the lake shore of Chicago with his arm around Peggy, and he didn't know what the moon was, what life was, what death was, and the moon was just like a Broadway stage.

He was the dunce of all Eternity.

—*Blue moon . . .*

—What does the moon mean? he asked the singers, and they looked at him and sang:

—*Blue moon . . .*

Where would he find out? He turned from the moon and was wafted through the sky, and the stars glittered, and he didn't know what they were, nor where he was going.

—Why did I live? he asked the eternal silence.

—I hear no answer.

—Why did I die? he asked.

—No answer.

There was no one to whom to talk. He drifted on, floating on water wings, and he began swimming through the sky.

It grew dark.

—Now, I will discover.

The darkness gathered around him, began to enfold him, and he knew that he was dying. But he couldn't be dying because he had already died.

Dressed like a knight, Finnegan was suddenly riding on a billy goat.

—There goes When Knighthood Was in Flower, a young man said.

He rode fast, faster and faster on his billy goat, onward, onward toward the unseen gates of Hell.

He knew that a maiden was burning in Hell. And he came to the towers of Hell and he climbed the towers, exultant in a sense of his youth, his strength, his bravery and his chivalry. Up and up he climbed, and suddenly, he stealthily walked on tiptoe along a dark corridor, and devils leaped on him, and he slayed devil after devil. He hacked his way through a swarm of grinning little devils who looked like Japanese soldiers, and every time he killed another one he cut off a pigtail, slung it in his belt, and hacked on. The Japanese devils waited to be killed. And then he leaped over a roaring flame and fell down and down a chute, and when he began to fall down, he grew

fearful, and suddenly he rose and rose, and he walked into a small room with no windows. It was dark.

—Save me, a woman's voice cried.

And he picked up a woman, leaped over a wall, and jumped across three castles, and they sat down together in a salon. She was old and haggard.

—My hero, she said in adoration.

And Finnegan looked off, depressed.

—I'll go back to Hell first, he said.

She chased him. He ran like wild, and she flew after him on the broom of a witch. He ran down streets, turned corners, and suddenly dove into a basement of the apartment he used to live in when he was a little boy in Chicago. He hid behind a pile of coal. He watched rats with green eyes crawl toward him, and he cowered into a corner. The rats came closer, green eyes focusing on him, teeth bared, and he cowered and tried to squeeze himself more tightly into the corner, and suddenly the rat was the hag, and he ran again, not knowing how he had escaped.

He ran on and on, realizing he was running to Hell and yet compelled to continue.

And he ran into a courtroom. God sat like a judge.

—Finnegan, God said, stroking His beard.

—Yes, Sir.

—Down on your knees.

Finnegan knelt down.

—The Case of Finnegan versus God, it was announced.

He knew now that the Day of Judgment had come.

He looked up like a small boy. God had an old face and a long white beard, and He strangely resembled Finnegan's own father.

—What have you got to say for yourself? God asked Finnegan.

—Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned.

—I know that. What do you say?

—I am a sinner, have mercy on me.

—Why didn't you take mercy when you had a chance?

—I was weak. I am heartily sorry.

—Liar.

He was lying, for was he sorry? Just now, as he knelt in trembling fear in the court of God, he was remembering a piece of tail he had had on Fifty-seventh Street in New York.

—Now, your sins. Tell them to the world, God said.

A clerk, dressed like a top sergeant in the United States Army, stood facing Finnegan. He held a scroll in his hand, and the paper extended beyond the side door of the courtroom. Finnegan saw that it was toilet paper.

—Finnegan's sins.

—Hear ye! Hear ye! The sins of Finnegan, God roared.

IV

And just as the clerk dressed like a sergeant began to read the sins of Finnegan, he woke up. It was bright outside. He heard the noise of an automobile far below in the street. He felt dopey. His head ached, and he had a sour stomach. He blinked his eyes, trying to get his orientation. He had been having a terrible dream. He couldn't remember it, except that God was in it, and that there had been something in it about Peg. He was afraid. He heard footsteps outside the door of the hotel room. He quivered. He was jumpy. What was there to be afraid of? He sat up, lit a cigarette, and looked around him. His clothes were flung over a chair. He was naked. He blinked his eyes and hurried to the bathroom to duck his head in cold water. He came out refreshed after a shower. But a lingering sadness disturbed him.

He noticed that it was four o'clock. He had to be back at twelve. What would he do? He dressed slowly, old memories mingling with his memory of last night and of the drunken divorcee on Fifty-seventh Street. He thought of what they had done together. Nothing in the world like a really good-looking and experienced dame. And yet he was ashamed. Why be

ashamed? He was a soldier going to war. He might not come back. Life was short. Make merry when you can.

—Life is short, he reflected, tying his tie.

His life, thirty-eight years, now seemed so short. He realized, as if he had just gained a flashing insight which almost explained the meaning of life, that the past was dead, gone. All his life had led up to this minute. Only this minute was real. The past was unreal. He longed to have it back, but it was gone.

He left the room, rode down in a crowded elevator, passed through a jammed lobby, and wandered aimlessly about crowded New York streets. He ended up at the same bar at which he had met the woman last night. He drank beer and played music, listening again to the song that had made him so nostalgic. He tried to think of the past. He wondered about the future. Would he come back?

Tournament Star

I

<i>St. Mary's</i>		<i>Stanton No. D.</i>
Dolan	rf.	Olgatt
Korolensky	lf.	Bjornsen
Schultz	c.	Mickelson
O'Connor	rg.	Corcoran
Brancheau	lg.	Schaeffer

CHEERS, organized and unorganized, broke out in the large University gymnasium as the two squads trotted out onto the floor with snap and rhythm. Cal Dolan, lanky and thin, with black, curly hair, led the St. Mary squad. He wore a red sweater with a white S. M. and the armband signifying the championship of the previous year. After dribbling, he arched the ball neatly through the basket from the center circle. More cheers broke out. Cal could hear his name being shouted out in quick, brief, but shrill commendation.

It had been predicted that this game would be one of the most thrilling and well played in the National Scholastic High School tournament. The University gymnasium was jammed; the bleacher seats put in for the tournament at either end of the building, and on the sides flanking the basketball courts, were crowded to capacity; the overflow crowd was upstairs, along with those who had paid a lower price and who were ranged around the outer railing and on the slanting indoor track which circled the gymnasium from above.

St. Mary's, the Catholic high-school champions of Chicago

for the year, were reputed to be the classiest basketball squad in Cook County. They were playing in the National Tournament after an undefeated season. And Cal Dolan, their captain, was the hub of their offense; he was widely recognized as one of the cleverest and greatest all-round basketball players ever seen on the high-school basketball courts of Cook County. *The Chicago Questioner* had printed a feature article about him. And it had also discussed his chances of breaking through the Stanton Five-man Defense of six-foot players. Under his picture it had used the caption: "Hope of the Local Irish in National Tourney."

The game was to start soon. The squads warmed up. Many of the thirty-five-hundred-odd spectators kept their eyes on Cal as he moved about the floor trying fancy shots. His team mates formed two lines on either side of the basket and ran under it trying short shots in turn. Cal was cheered every time he sank a long shot.

Jack Bergdoll, St. Mary's coach, was a former University star. The gym continually thundered with cheers for Jack, for his team, and for Cal Dolan. St. Mary was the favorite of the crowd. Many University students, and even some former alumni, joined in with the rooting contingent of St. Mary students who had come to the game.

Under the other basket, the high-school team from Stanton, North Dakota, eight huskies, six of them over six feet tall and most of them blonds, were likewise warming up. They handled the ball expertly, and all of them made short, quick shots from under the basket with deadly accuracy.

Cal Dolan kept moving about the floor, attempting long and difficult shots from various angles. He seemed to be in perfect form.

II

Trying another long one, Cal wondered if he seemed to the crowd to be showing off. But suppose he did give them that impression? He really didn't care. Defeat or victory depended

upon his eye. He had to practice these shots. They had to win. By God, they would!

He moved back from the left-side lines to the jumping circle and twirled one in. He heard more cheers and also a loud-voiced razzberry.

—Why, oh, Christ, why, had he ever done it with that bitch? It hadn't even been any fun. Shouldn't he have known better? And so close to the tournament, too. Yes, it was just his luck to get burned. Christ, that was luck, all right! Coming at the end of his career, too, after all the good luck he had had. If he ever caught the bitch, he'd knock her teeth out and kick her in the breast. But how would he ever catch a casual pickup in a city like Chicago? And how would or could revenge change anything? He didn't know whether or not he could go through a game, a game like this with such big lads against him. It might be too grueling. But he would, goddamn it, he'd go through it, come what may! He'd play the game of his career. They'd win. They'd win this damn tournament.

He tried a one-handed overhead shot from the side, near the middle of the floor; the ball went in. He had his eye. If he sank some of these right off the reel and gave the boys a lead, then he could loaf and perhaps go out of the game for a few minutes and take a rest. The cheers he heard were flattering, gratifying. The referee's whistle announced that the game would start. More cheers again broke across the gym. He heard an organized school cheer. He turned and stepped over to the middle of the floor for the toss of the coin, and also to shake hands with Mickelson, center and captain of the North Dakota team.

III

Back when Cal Dolan had been in grammar school, he used to come over from Sixty-fifth and Halsted to see games played in these tournaments. Then, and also on days when he would be playing basketball with the kids or shooting baskets in the vacant lot where they had put up grocery baskets with the

bottoms knocked out, he had dreamed longingly of a moment in his life such as this one. He had watched other teams and the high-school stars of other years come and go in this tournament. Yes, he had dreamed that some day he would lead his team, champions of the Catholic High Schools, over here. He would bring his team to the National Championship. Through all those hours at school, particularly in his freshman year, when he had played and practiced, he had persistently clung to this dream. And now here he was ready to make that dream come true. The stage was all set. And he had perfect confidence in himself, also, except for his tough luck. Christ, oh, Christ, why had he been such a chump!

He shook hands with the six-foot North Dakota captain. He won the toss and, since he had been practicing on the north basket, picked it for the first half.

The game was on. Cal walked to his position at right forward as if unaware of the cheers, of the words of encouragement shouted at him from all sides. He decided that they'd have to try and get a quick lead over these hicks. Yes, if they got a big one, he could go out for a rest. He rubbed his left palm casually across the back of his neck on the left side. It was the signal for play number one, in which he cut down under the basket, took the throw, and flipped it in off his right hand with that trick one-handed twirl shot he had mastered to such a high degree of perfection. He shook hands with his guard. The whistle blew. The referee tossed the ball up. The two centers jumped. Cal cut across the floor, followed by his guard. But the St. Mary center had been outjumped, and Brancheau, the left guard, was waving his arms in front of the Dakota right forward. Cal turned and raced toward the other end of the court. His guard followed him closely. The ball was retrieved on a pass by O'Connor, St. Mary's right guard. O'Connor flung it to Cal. He caught it on the right side of the court, near the side line. Unable to pass, he bounced it quickly against Schaeffer of Stanton. It went out of bounds. St. Mary had the offside. Cal passed to Brancheau, who was free near the Stanton basket. The Dakota five formed

for defense in their own area of the court. Cal wove in and out among them, still dogged by his guard. Malloy passed to the other guard, Brancheau. Cal cut back and took a pass in the St. Mary territory. Bugs Korolensky, the other St. Mary forward, tore down the floor. Cal tried a long pass to him under the basket. The ball went out of bounds.

—Damn it, out, Cal thought to himself.

But it was good that the out was under their basket. Cal went forward, hoping to intercept the play, or that maybe an interception would be made by the guards and then the ball would be flashed to him. He went down the left-side line. O'Connor, the St. Mary floor guard, smashed in between two Stanton players, jumped up, and nabbed a pass. While still in motion in the air, he turned and flung the ball to Cal. Cal caught it midway between the center circle and the basket on the left-hand side of the court, whirled around, and let the ball go. It swished through the basket. He heard the resounding cheers from the crowd, the quick words of encouragement from his team mates because of his spectacular shot. This was like old times, old games. They were off now.

Walking into position, he kicked out his right leg, as if he were trying to get a kink out of it. This was the signal for play number four. Korolensky ran forward to try and catch the jump-off near the center circle. Cal cut back a few feet and across the floor, hoping to receive a pass near the free-throw circle and then to toss the ball in back of him to Schultz, who would cut down and come under the basket on the left side. But the Dakota man got the jump. Cal turned to see their quick passing put the ball under the basket for an easy shot. The score was tied. Cal gave signal number one. The play didn't go off. Cal pitched into the struggle for the ball. The referee's whistle blew, and the ball had to be jumped. He drew back and, as if by instinct, caught the tip-off to the right of his opposing jumper. He turned, dribbled, and, dribbling low, changed from right to left hand to pass a guard who came crashing by him, and shot on the run from the edge of the free-throw

circle. Four to two. He felt as good as ever. Maybe it wouldn't bother him.

"Joe, listen, don't try to outjump him. Try and dope out their style of play and signals and let him have the jump," Cal told Schultz before they lined up for the next jump.

Cal crashed in, high in the air, caught the jump-off ball, and flipped it down to Brancheau, the St. Mary standing guard. The Dakotas lined up for their five-man defense. Cal zigzagged in and out of their territory, dogged by his guard. He took a pass on the right side of the court, near the offside line, trickily ducked under the guard who was blocking him, and shot to Joe Schultz, who missed an easy shot. The Dakotas took the ball down the floor, and the St. Mary defense tightened up, playing man for man. There were three jump-offs in the St. Mary territory and a severe struggle for the ball under the basket.

Cal dove for the ball as it suddenly rolled free, and he was bumped roughly by a Dakota guard. The whistle sounded. Cal had a free throw. He slowly walked to the free-throw line, puffing slightly. He took his time and made the free throw.

A sudden pain shot across his groin.

He gritted his teeth. He had to come through. Coming through, winning, meant the same thing over again tomorrow, and on to the end of the tournament. They'd have to win five or six tough games to win the tournament. The ball went up. And he halfheartedly made an effort to get the tip-off. The ball was passed down into the St. Mary territory. Cal ran forward to block a throw from behind, but the pass was made before he arrived with his arms flung out. He followed a Dakota forward toward the basket but was too slow. The ball was passed over again, and a shot was missed. Two St. Mary players were in the air to catch the rebound; one of them and a Dakota man got their hands on it simultaneously. They landed back on their feet, clutching for the ball. In the jump-off, a Dakota man tipped the ball straight into the basket. Five to four.

This was the first time in many a game that Cal had lost heart. Had to snap out of it. Come on, get up your old Irish! Fight! Got to fight! No matter what happens, got to fight, win, fight, win! Come on, Cal, old boy!

He gave the signal and pitched forward to catch the tip-off, but the jump was lost. He went down the floor toward the basket St. Mary's was defending and startled the Dakota player by taking the ball away from him from behind. He dribbled straight and fast down the side lines and, without losing momentum, pivoted at the outside line on a level with the basket and twisted a one-hand shot from the right hand while in his pivoting motion. His face wore a noncommittal expression, as a cheer went up for one of the trickiest shots ever seen on the tournament floor. Seven to four.

—Keep it up, Cal, old boy! Come on now, keep it up!

He gave a signal and turned to run back under the basket. The jump was successful, but the pass went over his head, outside. Cal stood facing the man who had taken the outside ball to pass it in, waving his arms, and he batted the pass offside. Then Dakota passed the ball back into the court, and Cal tagged the outside man, who was standing guard. There was a mixup in the center of the floor, and a jump ball was called by the referee. A Dakota man flung the ball offside, and Joe Schultz hurried forward to toss the ball back in before the Dakota five could set their defense. Cal was free, but suddenly, as if from nowhere, the pass was intercepted, and the Dakotas carried the ball down the court. A fierce defense, plus erratic shooting, prevented the Dakotas from scoring; six shots went wide of the basket before St. Mary's regained possession of the ball. They came forward and failed to make three successive entries into the opposing five-man defense, but retained possession of the ball. Cal finally called for it and tried a long one from past the middle of the floor. It twirled around the rim, threatening to go in, but rolled out. The crowd groaned. The Dakotas seasawed forward and sunk one, making the score seven to six.

The period closed with the ball going out under the St. Mary basket.

IV

—I feel all right, Cal said to himself, sitting down with his team by the free-throw circle.

"They play a hard game," Joe said.

"We got to play harder," Cal said, trying to convince himself, to pep himself up for the effort. The rest might do him good, too. He told his team mates to watch and see if they couldn't catch their signals, because Joe Schultz was being out-jumped.

Right at the start of the second period, the North Dakota five made a dash and splurged ahead, thirteen to seven. Cal called time out and encouraged his team to pull themselves together, to fight. He told them that everything was at stake, and that they had to play hard, play fast, watch everything, take advantage of every break and every opening, and not let these hicks get another break—give them as few shots as possible and dog them, each taking a man when he got into St. Mary's territory and sticking to that man. And he was going to try some long shots. They should feed the ball to him. If his eye was good now, he might sink a few long ones. And after he shot, the other forward, Korolensky, and Joe Schultz would immediately break for the board, go smashing in, and try to follow it up, in case he missed the shots.

The ball was jumped, and Dakota got possession of it. They passed back and forth in St. Mary's territory, but the St. Mary boys guarded with such close ferocity that Dakota didn't get a shot, and the ball went out of bounds. Dakota quickly returned to its own half of the floor, forming its five-man defense, with the two forwards and center forming a first line and the two guards, on the outer edges of the floor, a second line.

St. Mary's fooled around, passing back and forth, as if attempting to break through. Then Joe Schultz and Korolensky,

broke down the floor. The ball was passed to Cal, who dribbled to the center circle, stood there feinting passes, and then shot. The ball snapped neatly through the basket, and the score was thirteen to nine.

Dakota retrieved one of the lost points on a free throw, following a personal foul by Brancheau. St. Mary's played hard and fiercely, and for the next three minutes the only points scored were two more free throws on fouls by the Dakota boys. The score was sixteen to nine. Cal had a chance to try the first clear shot his team had got in three minutes, an open fling from the side lines halfway into the Dakota territory. The ball bounced off the backboard, was retrieved by the big Dakota guard, passed down the floor, and before St. Mary's could swing back into a closely guarding defense unit, the score was eighteen to nine against them.

Cal tried to get free in his own territory, but he was closely guarded. After a jump-off, he quickly whispered to his running guard, O'Connor, to sneak down. O'Connor did, and, following offside plays, he made two open shots in succession under the basket, bringing the score to eighteen to thirteen. Joe Schultz then scored a free throw.

The stand was cheering, and the St. Mary supporters were yelling loudly and lustily. A formal school cheer exhorting the team to fight rang across the gym, followed by seven rahs hastily returned by a group of University students giving the strangers their vocal support. Cal snatched a pass from the air and, while off his feet, he twisted a shot in. Wild cheering again broke loose. While under the basket and trying to shoot, Cal was roughed up and given two free throws. He made them, and the score stood eighteen up.

The St. Mary boys were in stride now. Cal was patted on the back as he turned from the free-throw circle and walked into position for the jump-off. The two fives fought out the last minute of the first half without another score. The crowd cheered the teams as they walked off the floor, the substitutes rushing out to fling sweaters and jerseys over their backs.

V

Gratified, relieved, anxious, Cal walked off the floor. There was a pain in his groin. God, if he could only pull through. He could go home and rest, take a hot bath, and get up late tomorrow morning. Maybe then he would feel all right for the game. He would sit down during the ten-minute rest in the lockers or, rather, lie down on a bench and take it easy. He might come back feeling better.

In the locker room, Jack Bergdoll asked Cal how he felt. He noticed that Cal was limping.

"It's nothing, Jack."

"Better get it rubbed down."

"No, it'll be all right," Cal said.

He tried to walk without that limp, but he had the pain in his groin. He felt like telling Jack the truth but decided he better not.

He lay down quickly on a bench. He still had pains. He scarcely listened to words of praise showered on him and, when he was asked how he felt, he said all right, only that it was a hard game and he was saving himself all he could.

Jack spoke to them. He said that they should be five baskets ahead right now, and that they had played a ragged in-and-out-game. He said they were outweighed and that the other boys had it on them in height. They had to play fast and heady basketball, following the ball every minute, guarding closely, keeping on the tail of their opponents. Those Dakota hicks could shoot. It was death to give them any shots. They had to guard more closely. They had shown spurts, particularly when they had had that rally in the last few minutes of the second period, when they had played the kind of ball they were capable of, the kind he liked to see them play. But, on occasion, they had left themselves wide open. There was one time when the other boys had retrieved a rebound from the backboard, and they had been caught flatfooted. This was a close game, and such boners were liable to mean victory or defeat.

Cal, he added, had done some fine, heady, brilliant playing, but he had been spurty and flashy; half the time Cal was on his toes, but the other half he had been moping.

Just then he looked at Cal. He went over to him.

"Anything wrong with you?" he asked. Cal sensed suspicion in the coach's voice.

"No, nothing. I'm going all right now. I think I'll be okay, Jack."

"What's wrong with the leg?"

"Oh, I don't know. It's some old trouble I had in here. Maybe it's a hernia," Cal said evasively.

Jack looked at Cal suspiciously.

"Let me see it," Jack said.

"Oh, it's all right. It's gone now," Cal said.

"Listen, kid, something's wrong with you. What is it?"

Cal wanted to tell. He didn't know what to say.

"I'm all right."

"Now, come on. You aren't."

"Yes, I am."

"Here, lie down and let me see what's wrong. Slip your pants down."

Cal reluctantly obeyed, and Jack felt around his groin.

"There's no lumps or anything there."

Cal thought how lucky he was that he didn't have to wear that sack any more. That would have given it away.

Jack looked at him quizzically.

"Listen, have you got a dose?" Jack asked.

"What, huh?" Cal asked, sitting up, pale. "No, Jack, I haven't."

"You have, too! Why the hell didn't you tell me?"

"I haven't. I don't know what's wrong."

"I can tell by the look in your eye. Listen, is this the way to treat me after how I made you kids into a team?"

Cal looked off, blushing and ashamed.

"I'm no good, Jack."

He looked over at the priests at the other side of the locker

room. If they knew, he'd be ruined. He quickly fixed up his jock straps and belted his pants.

Jack looked around.

"Hurt much?"

"It just comes and goes."

"How did it happen?"

Cal blushed again.

"Listen, what do you think I am? Don't you think I know what kids are like? Come on, boy, what's the matter? Tell me."

"Some jane I picked up at a dance."

"You should have known better. How am I gonna win a national championship now?"

"I'll win it. I'll have my eye this time. You watch."

Jack looked off, troubled, disturbed.

"You better stay out."

"Please, please, Jack. Let me go in. I tell you I'm all right," Cal pleaded, and he looked off, wincing with pain.

It was time to go back on the floor for the second half.

Cal walked beside Jack.

"Here, wait until game time, sit down with me here on the bench."

"You're gonna let me play?"

"I'll take a chance. I got to win that title. If you can stand the gaff, I'll let you stay in there."

"I'm sorry, Jack. Christ, I didn't think."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I was afraid."

"Did you see a doc?"

"Yeh."

"What did he say?"

"Oh," Cal exclaimed. He didn't know how to lie.

"He said not to play."

"Please, Jack, let me go."

"I shouldn't let you go back, but, well, go ahead."

Cal walked in slowly and, gritting his teeth, he took his position.

VI

Cal shot toward the basket with the jump-off. A pain cut him in the groin. He limped. The ball was passed to him. He missed the shot and then ran to jump up and get it off the board. He was bumped by a big Dakota guard. He fell. He got up, wincing with pain. He limped off.

He saw McClellan talking to Jack. McClellan took off his sweater and came out. Cal stood alone. The referee motioned to him. He walked off the floor, sobbing. The crowd roared, and he received an ovation such as no other player in the tournament had as yet been given. He sat down by Jack and said nothing.

Jack watched. Dakota made three baskets in a row.

"They say you've got guts. You lost the title for me and your school," Jack said bitterly.

"Please let me go back in there."

"You did enough to me," Jack said.

Cal sobbed. His team mates who were sitting on the bench stared at him with sympathy. Members of the crowd watched him.

"Can I go back?"

"You're not fit." Jack said bitterly, as Dakota made another basket.

Dakota started to run away with the game.

Cal sat, glum, wiping away the tears.

"Jack, please let me go back," he begged.

"It's too late. It's gone now. You did your dirty work," Jack said.

Cal sat still on the bench but could say nothing, condemning himself, fighting back the tears, calling himself a louse, a rat, a sonofabitch.

Father Donald, the athletic director, sat beside him.

"Go and dress. You're a disgrace to the school. I don't want to see you in uniform."

Cal got up, and walked off the floor in tears, again receiving

a thunderous ovation. He sat alone in the locker room, sobbing, hurt, berating himself. He got dressed and left the gymnasium before the game was over.

Outside, he limped alone in the frosty March night. He couldn't think. The tears still came. He tried to imagine what he might have done. He thought of the cheers he had received. He thought of his disgrace. He was ruined. He walked on and on, crying, not knowing what to do, asking himself why had he done this. Why had he sinned this way?

Fritz

I

THE OTHER DAY, when I read in the papers that units of the American army had captured Frankfort, I thought of Fritz.

I knew Fritz in Paris in 1931. He was my own age and as poor as I was. In fact, when he had to return to Germany, I loaned him the money with which to go. But Fritz seemed older than I. In fact, he sometimes referred to me as a boy. But we had in common the fact that we were both postwar youth. We were equally contemptuous of bourgeois values, of bourgeois culture. But he had come from Germany; I, from America. Even though we were both poor, even though I had left behind me an America in the depths of a depression, poverty, or at least deprivation, poverty was much more concrete to him than to me. And his prospects of a career were decidedly less promising than mine. He was an architect and, although only twenty-seven at the time, had gained some reputation in Germany. He had had to come to Paris in search of work. For a short time, he did manage to get a job there paying two thousand francs a month. But since he had no *carte de travail*, he was working illegally. His papers were not in order, and he was in constant danger of being picked up by the *flics*. Fritz was a member of the Communist Party of Germany, and it appeared that he was something of a protégé of a seemingly well-known and successful Alsatian architect with a home and an office near the Pantheon. This architect, Berger, I was to learn years later, was the contact and financial pay-off man for all the

agents of the Communist International who came to, or went through, France. His relationship with Berger leaves me with an unexplained curiosity about Fritz. Fritz seemed to know Berger well; in fact, it was Berger who had got him his job in Paris. But yet, when Fritz returned to Germany, no longer able to work in France, he had to borrow money from me for his fare. Why not from Berger? Did Fritz know of Berger's secret role and connections? Was Fritz involved in the international Russian apparatus? I hardly think so. If he had been, would he not have been better provided for? And wouldn't he have been more mysterious than he was? And would Berger have allowed Fritz to risk involvement with the police by letting him work illegally, when Berger could so easily have done something to prevent this possibility? This, more than any other consideration, leads me to conclude that Fritz was not an agent, and that he must have been unaware of Berger's secret international role. Withal, Fritz had something weighing on his mind. Who knows? At that, he might have been an agent working under Berger.

What had happened to him since I last had seen him? Had he been butchered by the Nazis? Or put into a concentration camp and broken? Had he got to Russia, as he so often had hoped to? He would have gone if he had had the money. Had he capitulated to the Nazis? I could speculate about Fritz endlessly. But such speculation can't be checked.

That spring when I met him, Paris was balmy and lovely. Almost everyone I knew was poor and faced with some kind of difficulty or other, mainly financial. And yet one was not usually depressed. Going to Europe from an America with its increasing breadlines and where misery was rampant, one could sense the handwriting on the wall. One knew that tremendous changes were coming in Europe, and one felt, sitting in cafés, wandering about the charming and so lively streets of Paris, that one was living in the shadow of war and revolution. The die had not yet been cast in Germany, and it appeared problematic whether or not there would be a workers' revolution led by the Communist Party or whether Hitler would come to

power. One knew, as if by a process of osmosis, that a mighty, and perhaps catastrophic, change was in the offing in Germany. And one expected the war to come, to come much sooner, even, than it eventually did. In those days it was the French Right—including many who were later to become collaborationists—who were most bellicose. Not only did the reactionary press of France bellow in the accents of a chauvinistic war spirit, but groups of the Right pasted signs on billboards all over Paris, calling for war, calling for an invasion of Germany. The newspapers made it clear that there were impending events of historic moment in Germany and that the misery was great there, too. The crisis was soon to reach France. But Paris was gay that springtime when the world crisis was beginning to deepen. When I was next there in 1938, it was a sadder, a more dispirited, Paris. But back in the spring of 1931 the streets and cafés were often crowded. It was easy to forget the world of impending disaster of which one read in the newspapers. And it is now clear that it was a springtime at the end of a period. The Americans and the English would soon be rushing home in large numbers, unable to remain in France because of the changes in currency rates and because the checks stopped coming from home. Even the Paris of tourists and Bohemians was changing slightly.

Fritz was a friend of Mendel and his wife, Ruby, whom I had known in Chicago and had run into accidentally in Paris. One night in May, I was to have dinner with them in a Chinese restaurant on the Boulevard Saint Michel, and they brought along Fritz and another young German architect, Paul. Fritz was tall and athletic in appearance, with broad shoulders, and he walked with a quick, springy step, usually on the balls of his feet. He had frank and winning ways, but his bushy black brows and small dark eyes almost suggested an uncontrollable inner restlessness. From the very first moment I saw him, I clearly grasped that he was a person who could not easily relax. If he was not talking, he would seem to sink into himself, to be brooding about something far away from what was being said, far away from Paris, even, and from what was then the present

moment. When he was talking, he would lean forward across the table, and his face would become drawn, almost taut. Most of the time he would give the impression that he was searching for something. He would keep glancing about a restaurant or a café, as if from face to face and as if he were looking for some face he would never see. He drank recklessly, gulping down his liquor as if he could find no pleasure in alcohol. He was usually tense, keyed up, and I frequently imagined that he lived in a world of inner chaos. It was this tension within him, a tension suggesting that at any moment he would launch out into some wild and reckless action, that caused me to think he was more experienced than I; that was why he seemed older. And as I came to know him slightly, it was clear that he carried with him not only personal sorrows but a sense of sorrow for his country, for his family living poorly in Frankfurt, for many, many of his German countrymen. Although a Communist, he did not always speak like an internationalist. Emotionally, down in the depths of his self, were deeply felt national sentiments. Germany was his fatherland, his home, the source of all his memories. He often called it his fatherland, pronouncing the "f" like a "v." He was really a national Bolshevik of the German postwar youth.

I remember the first night we met more clearly than I do some of the other occasions on which I saw him. Besides us—Mendel, Ruby, Fritz, and Paul—Katz and his wife were along. Katz had studied under Harold Laski at the London School of Economics and held down a small job writing on financial matters for an English trade paper. He and Mendel were constantly arguing about the world situation. And that evening, they were arguing as usual, right through the meal at the Chinese restaurant—boring everyone else. Paul was blond, a Nordic type, literal and unimaginative. He had no temperament. That night he seemed especially bored. He scarcely talked during the dinner. Fritz watched Ruby with intent eyes, but she acted as if unaware of his gaze. When we had finished eating and were ready to go to the Café Sélect on the Boulevard Montparnasse, the argument between Mendel and Katz had become almost

violent, as well as utterly irrelevant and illogical. They were screaming at each other concerning the reading of *Capital*. Katz claimed that he had read it and that Marx was antiquated; Mendel denounced Katz as bourgeois and told him to read Marx again. And Katz kept calling Mendel "My dear chap" while he accused him of never having read Marx. On the street, they walked together and continued shouting at each other. I happened to be alongside of Paul, who spoke rather good English, but he had nothing to say. Fritz managed to walk beside Ruby, and they spoke in low voices, laughing continuously. It was obvious that Ruby was flirting with him.

We sat around a table at the Café Sélect. It was a lovely May evening. The café was crowded; there were many Americans and English at the tables. The sidewalk was lively, and people kept passing by. The street was gay and noisy. Rug vendors stood in front of the café with their wares. A Frenchman hawked out and held up the latest copy of a little green paper called a *poule sheet*, a paper which listed registered prostitutes. An old Frenchman appeared, regular as the clock, barking out about *L'Intransigeant*. Near by, Ford Madox Ford sat with a group, smoking and looking here and there, as if he saw nothing. In front of us there was an English homosexual, and he would continually jerk his head one way or another, and remark, with keen pleasure:

"I say, people hereabouts are getting tatty."

The argument between Katz and Mendel reached the point where Katz was going to prove irrefutably that Communism was contrary to human nature. Mendel shouted, loudly and contemptuously:

"You wouldn't know anything about human nature because you're not human. You're English."

"My dear chap, insults aren't arguments."

"Now we insult the bourgeoisie. Tomorrow, when we win Germany, we'll shoot you."

Fritz did not understand English very well, and at this point he had lost even the semblance of interest in the argument. He kept looking meaningfully at Ruby. Paul sat stiff

and speechless, and I wondered why he didn't leave. Ruby interrupted the argument to demand a Pernod, and Mendel told her she couldn't have one. She whined and cooed and argued until Fritz took her across the street to the Dôme for a Pernod. He walked with an unusual springiness as he crossed the street with Ruby on his arm. Mendel glared fiercely after them. Then he spoke to Katz with even more intense spite. In due time Fritz and Ruby came back, laughing like happy children. She was a bit tipsy.

The argument between Mendel and Katz flared up again. Mendel described the Versailles peace pact as a robber's peace, and he predicted that the revolution would come in Germany any day now. Fritz became interested when he heard this and asked Mendel to translate what was said into German. Katz immediately accused Mendel of translating unfairly and he himself spoke to Fritz in German. Fritz's eyes lit up. He leaned forward. But then he grew morose and remarked sadly: "My poor vadderland."

"My dear chap, I don't wish to be personal, but the Germans got what they deserved at Versailles," Katz said.

I knew that Katz was an admirer of Keynes and I spoke of Keynes's book, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, but I couldn't get very far. Mendel launched forth in a diatribe against the French, and Fritz interrupted to say, still morosely:

"The Frenchman, *le français, il est mauvais. Très mauvais.*"

Ruby interrupted and managed to wheedle another Pernod, ordering it from a White Russian *garçon* in a haughty manner. I got to talking with Fritz, although we couldn't understand each other clearly. I recall him saying, with a wounded note in his voice:

"*Le Français*, he, *il est mauvais*. He rob my vadderland, my country, *patrie*, my peepuls. In Frankfort, my peepuls, they are *pauvre*, very *pauvre*. *Pour moi, pas possible*, I can't find vork. *Travail*, he is not. I vork here. I have no papers. No *carte d'identité*. No *carte de travail*."

"It's going to be different. Wait for the German revolution," Mendel said, pounding the table.

The conversation soon got around to Hitler.

"Hitler, he is no good for the vorker," Fritz said. "*Mauvais.*"

At this point he had become very morose, very sad, not at all convinced or confident. And as he talked, his eyes searched Ruby. Suddenly a false gaiety came over him, and he ordered champagne for everyone. Mendel warned him that he couldn't afford to do this, and he waved Mendel's warning aside with a cavalier gesture. I noticed that he changed instantly. He laughed and made playful faces at Ruby, and when the champagne came he drank his down in one gulp. It was clear that he drank and laughed because of a feeling of desperation. When this bottle was drunk, he took Ruby off, and they returned with a bottle of champagne he had bought at a store. We put it under the table and sedulously poured it into our glasses. Fritz drank more champagne in the same desperate fashion.

II

I remember that I ran into him on the day that the Hoover Moratorium was declared, and we sat over a *bock* in the Sélect. He was exceedingly depressed and kept saying, as he sadly shook his head from side to side:

"My poor country!"

He saw no way out for Germany, no way out except the Revolution, and he spoke of this possibility with a certain despairing hope. He was not, like his friend, Mendel, really convinced that the Revolution was going to be quickly triumphant. Mendel was also convinced that the Red Army would march into Germany to aid the German workers in creating a Socialist, Soviet Germany. Fritz never spoke of this, and when Mendel would boastfully summon the Red Army, Fritz would look at him as one does at a child. On this day he was unusually depressed and said little. He kept repeating that there was a crisis in Germany, but at the same time he expressed no desire to return.

Sometimes he would come out to visit us in Sceaux, where we were living during the summer of 1931. He would look at my few books and ask me various questions about them, and we would manage to discuss and make ourselves clear, he, in his bad English and somewhat better French, I, in my bad French. Whenever we spoke of a novel, he would ask me if the writer were a Communist. One day we walked out toward the other end of Sceaux, or, to be more precise, of Sceaux Robinson, to see a group of model apartments which were being constructed under the inspiration of French architects. This project was supposed to exhibit the style of the rather new functional architecture. Fritz pointed at some of the cream-puff stone houses, the gewgaw structures, and exclaimed, in a voice of contempt:

"Ce n'est pas fonctionaliste."

He went on to criticize these houses and he concluded what he had to say by remarking, again with contempt:

"Française!"

Fritz lost his job, which, as I have already mentioned, he had obtained with Berger's aid. Berger appeared to be very successful. He was an intelligent man, widely informed, and yet at the time I found him peculiarly noncommunicative. I saw him a few times and recall that he had a rather pretty and charming blond wife. His office was light and airy, with many books and drawings about it, and his home was modernistic. Mendel used to see him often, and it was through Mendel that I met him. My French was so inadequate that when we met, Mendel would translate into German. I recall we talked of Lewis Mumford's work, and that I criticized it, but that Berger felt it was of some consequence when it dealt with architecture. This was a mild surprise to me, when Mendel translated this remark from German to English, especially because Berger was a Communist. We talked of philosophy, and I mentioned Dewey, and Mendel played a trick I was able to grasp even though I couldn't speak German. He translated my remarks by saying that I was a follower of John Dewey, and that John Dewey was the American Eucken. I recall that Berger looked at me, bored, rather as if I

were of no consequence, and at the time this displeased me because I wanted to impress him. How lucky I was, I only learned years later. How much of a favor Mendel did me, he might never have known. As I have mentioned, I learned years later and only by accident of Berger's connections.

Early in September Fritz lost his job. He couldn't go on living in Paris. He had to return to Germany, but he did not have the fare—another reason, as I have mentioned, why I think he could not have been an agent of his friend Berger. And he came out to Sceaux to borrow the money from me. Our circumstances were difficult, but we had just had a rescue in the form of an advance on a novel, and I was able to loan him his fare back to Germany. He insisted on giving me a formal note for my loan, although I tried to convince him it wasn't necessary, but he insisted again and, in fact, gave me a note. I recall his remarking in badly pronounced and ungrammatical English that he might be killed in a railroad accident and that if I had no note from him, I wouldn't be able to get my money back. He went to Germany. In a few months he was back in Paris. Conditions in Germany had grown worse. Hitler and the Nazis were a danger, a terrible danger. Yet he still did not believe that Hitler would come to power. France wanted war, he thought, and there very likely would be a war. He was voluble in expressing his regrets at being unable to pay me and promised to do so as soon as he could. He still acted with that suggestion of a controlled tension which might snap at any moment. He drank even more than in the spring. He didn't get terribly drunk, but his profound despair was obvious in the way he would drink Pernod and try to make up to Ruby. And then one day there was a routine roundup of foreigners by the *flics*. They roped off a street on the west bank and asked everyone inside that area for his papers, in order to catch any foreigners without *cartes d'identité*, or, if they were employed, their *cartes de travaux*. Fritz, again employed without a permit, was caught, and his employer was fined. Fritz's status in France was dubious, and there was danger of his being deported.

At this time I recall sitting with him in the Sélect. Again he spoke bitterly of the French, and more bitterly of capitalism. Mendel and Ruby were there. Ruby wanted a Pernod, and there was the usual scene between them.

"Mendel, I have such a headache," she said, and this, too, was as usual.

Mendel, who was a trifle hard of hearing, wanted to know what she had said, and she repeated. He refused to let her have Pernod. She whined and demanded, and Fritz finally took her across the street to the Dôme, and this, too, had happened before, more or less as it was happening this particular evening. Mendel couldn't, or wouldn't, protest, apparently because he owed Fritz a hundred and fifty francs.

For a while Mendel was bitter, melancholy, savage in his comments. But then the conversation lightened. Even Fritz became nervously gay. I recall that I told a story I had heard in Chicago, about Al Capone. In France at the time there was widespread interest in Capone and American gangsterism, and especially in Chicago. I told the story of how a new policeman in the district where Capone had his headquarters and major brothels had inadvertently picked up a fairly important gunman in a raid and had taken the Capone gangster's gun away from him. He was informed by his superior at the police station that he had made a mistake and had been told:

"I can't do anything for you about this. You'll have to see the big boy."

The policeman had been sent to the big boy, Capone, and Capone was reported to have lectured him and then to have told him that inasmuch as he was new and inexperienced, he, Capone, would let him off easily this time. He would be given another chance but was warned not to make any more mistakes.

Fritz laughed heartily. I told other gangster anecdotes, and we were rather spirited. And then suddenly he frowned, sank into melancholia, said glumly that Germany, his poor fatherland—it was very unhappy.

"My vadder," he said in a heavy accent, "*il n'est pas travail*."

Pour lui, il n'est pas travail. He is—chomeur. Le travail, pas possible. For beaucoup my countrymen no work. Le travail, il n'y a rien."

And he was quiet for a long period and he drank. He looked about him.

And then Mendel made a violent denunciation of capitalism.

"Hitler," said Fritz, "he is—vat you say—actor? Hitler, he vill be *bon, très bon* in music hall, *le bal*."

We began speculating as to when the next world war would really come, and then I recall Fritz's saying:

"Malade à tête, Hitler."

And a little later:

"Soon, *le communiste*, he will lead my countrymen. Then, *le capitalisme*, Hitler—*il sera*—gone. Then *moi, j'aurai le travail dans ma patrie*."

I talked with him, sat with him, and had such talks as these on a number of occasions. Sometimes I would think of differences in his past and in my own, since we were of the same age. I would sit back in a mood of lassitude and watch him, this German boy of my own age. I would sense and formulate these differences to myself. I would think of him during the War, a boy, knowing that it was really a war, and contrast this with myself, daydreaming of being a hero, playing but not feeling any of the consequences of war. Daily, as a boy, the War must have made a strong impact on him. Hunger, sights of the wounded, deaths, malnutrition, so many of his generation gone into consumption—misery. This is what the War had meant to Fritz. And for me, it had been merely an occasion for a boy's heroic daydreams.

I thought of such differences on this night. And then Fritz recklessly took Ruby off. Mendel was furious and stamped out of the café. I didn't see Fritz again, but the next day I saw Ruby around Montparnasse, and she had a black eye, and there was gossip that she had not come home all night, and that Mendel had punched her in the eye.

Fritz was deported back to Germany.

III

At this point, rather than speculate as to what might have happened to him, I will present a few letters he wrote me.

Dear Friend and Wife:

Thanks for your letter of November 26. I only received yesterday. I stayed in Frankfort now and I don't have a chance to coming return to Paris. It is very hart time for my to stay hier in Frankfort. I shall do a little work for my, but it is not match. I am happy, that I have my vather and my mother hier, then I can it and drink.

I am also happy that you and voman are well. Dear friend, about the money. I shall give you match bearer the 7th Dez. Thank for that letter. I am verry happy. You can count for 200 frs. But I shall see for more. I am sorry. I shall see that you all the money verry fast. For my package [Brachtel had mailed his clothes back to him] you see, I don't have money now for that and you can let in the American club. If I must have it, I shall write you and send you money for that, and you can mailet my.

I shall give you all the letters in the american express, rue scribe. One another think, dear friend. My sister is going yesterday with one auto in the mountains and she is now in the hospital, she is in a very great malheur.

The cheek is all kaputt and the doktor have take a piece of flesh from the neck and give it on the cheeck. That is terrible think, my very beautiful sister. I am verry verry sorry.

My dear, I shall send the money for you verry fast. I do hope you have good luck, and happiness your wife. I will write you.

*Very sincerely your's friend
Fritz*

And this letter:

My Dear Friend and Wife,

I don't have keep my word. And I don't now, way I shell make with you. I have nothing money in the future ?????

Heir in Frankfort, all my friend have nothing. For my it is so terrible Christmas. And you?

I don't now, wath I shall make in the future, today I cannot much write, and then, I don't now, you whill one time write my.

My dear, I beg you, give me very fast a letter and after I have it, I whill tell you many think.

And for you, I give you much salutations for the Christmas.

I beg your pardon for the terrible enlish but I think, you can understand.

*Allwais your friend
Fritz*

And here is a third letter:

Dear Friend and woman:

I received your letter, and I whill speak all think with you. My new Chef in Paris is writing my, that I don't can't work now, hi have not place for my. I'm very sorry and I don't can comming return to Paris and to see you. I think, you can good understand. Hir in frankfort it is one terrible time for work-ing, and I have not very great chance for make money.

You see, my dear, you must give my 3-4 days, and I whill give you the reportage René Clair for amerique. [He wanted to write a movie scenario with me.] I shall give you tex in German, and you must see someone, and you can write it in english. I can not very good writing and speaking.

And now, I send you much saluations.

*I think very well and your woman also and greet you
Yours Fritz.*

I have a few more letters, but they are very much the same as these, and tell the same story of Fritz. And then abruptly I heard from him no longer.

Deported back to Germany, what happened to him when the Nazis came to power?

This was Fritz. We were of the same generation, and we were more or less in the same kind of circumstances in Paris

at the same time. This was a crucial time. It was in the very depths of the world crisis, in the period when *la crise* also had reached Paris. Each of us, in our way, was without faith in world capitalism, and each of us was looking to the idea of socialism. I merely repeat, Fritz seems to me but one of millions, millions and millions who, in our time, have been lost in that terrible gulf of modern history.

Paris Scene: 1931

THE RETIRED AMERICAN businessman listened with interest while the elderly Australian became lyrical about the food he had eaten the previous evening.

"Well, sir, when you lose your stomach, you're through, the retired American businessman then began wistfully. "Say, if you gave me my choice between the loss of my stomach and of my manhood . . . well, sir, you know what I mean . . . I'd say, give me back my good, strong sturdy stomach . . . Ha! Ha! . . . And I wouldn't hesitate when I gave my answer, either."

There was weak pathos in the smiles of both men. They sat in the reading room of *The Chicago Clarion* on a street near the Place de l'Opéra. Outside, it was a gray Paris morning. The retired American businessman was corpulent and medium-sized, with graying temples and dull brown eyes. Sitting in the deep leather chair near the window and dropping his newspaper, which was clamped to a long pole, he complained that there was something wrong with his stomach. The two men discussed their digestion. The retired American businessman spoke of the kinds of food he couldn't eat. Since coming to Europe last spring, his stomach had seemed to go all out of kilter.

Their conversation suddenly ceased. They sat. The Australian meditatively enjoyed a cigar.

"Well, sir," the retired American businessman commented, "I see the English discount rate has been raised again."

"Is that so? I say, what does it mean?" asked the Australian.

"It means that the country is in financial danger."

The Australian puffed rapidly on his cigar, his face growing stern with indignation, and he angrily said that something ought to be done about the situation. After all, he added, "England is too sound a country to be in serious danger."

"Well," the retired American businessman said, "it is in danger just the same. They raised the gold discount rate a point a week or two back, and now they've had to go and raise it again."

"It must be serious," the Australian commented dolorously, again puffing slowly on his cigar.

The retired American businessman diligently lit a cigar.

"Well, sir, I say that it is in danger. And do you want to know the cause of it? I'll tell you." The American held his cigar aloft, paused dramatically, and then, like a man revealing mysterious knowledge, added, "It's that dole."

"That, sir, is thanks to the policy of the Labor government."

"Well, sir, I say that the man I personally hold responsible is Lloyd George." The retired American businessman emphatically wagged his head. "It's politicians like him that have got the world in the state it's in at the present time. You see, the laboring man's vote counts just as much as the millionaire's, and there are more laborers than millionaires in the world because there are more dumbbells than men with brains and intelligence. The laboring man thinks that all you got to do to create wealth is put bricks on top of a house, one after the other. So he's the prey of any demagogue that comes along, like Lloyd George, who gives him promises; and he goes ahead and takes the millionaire's money away from him. Now in America, we don't have that situation. Instead of electing demagogues, we elected a practical man, an engineer like Mr. Hoover, and, you watch, he's going to pull the country out of this here so-called depression. He's got gray matter."

The Australian interrupted to inquire what the words "gray matter" meant.

"Brains, intelligence, knowledge, the little old gray matter

here in the upper story," answered the retired American businessman with pride as he pointed a right index finger at his head.

The Australian nodded, a gleam of understanding and agreement coming into his eyes.

"Well, sir," the retired American businessman went on, "when the laboring man and his demagogue politicians take all the millionaire's money away from him, he's gonna find himself starving. Now in England, that Labor government is going to go ahead paying out that dole until there won't be any money left in the country. Then they'll all be like the Russians—they'll all starve. It takes brains to run a country, and the laboring man, if he hasn't had enough brains to make more than a bricklayer out of himself—how can he be able to run a country? Why, even in Russia, they got to have brains. Take this man Stalin. Now, he might be a demagogue, but he's got brains. He had to have 'em or else he wouldn't be dictating there. Any man that gets to the top, he's got to have brains, and the laborer had better learn that that's the law of life before it's too late."

The retired American businessman paused to relight his cigar, and the Australian started to say something, but the American beat him to the draw and went on talking in a slow, self-confident, seemingly profound tone of voice.

"Yes, the laborer better learn this before he drives the whole world into a state of starvation. He better just go ahead and do his work, and let the man with brains run things the way we Americans let Mr. Hoover do it. If he votes for demagogic politicians, puts them into office just because they promise doles and things like that—measures that are economically unsound—well, sir, I tell you it's the politicians like Lloyd George and Ramsay MacDonald promising people they won't have to work that is putting England on the skids. I say, thank God we don't have them in America. Because we are going to get right out of this so-called depression and get back where we were a few years ago."

The Australian assured the retired American businessman

that he was jolly well right, and they agreed in a moment of head-nodding, affirmative silence.

"Labor," the Australian then said, drawing the cigar out of his mouth, "labor has run my own country bloody well blotto. You know, we had a Socialist government there for years, and, I tell you, it has put the country bloody well blotto."

"Yes, sir," the retired American businessman answered, shifting in his chair, "that's just what has put your country on the rocks. You know, I wouldn't invest a penny of my money in Australian bonds. I'd rather just let it lay idle in the bank."

A healthy, well-dressed American of about thirty entered, sat down, listened.

"Now take Australia," the retired American businessman went on. "It's an industrial country, isn't it? How can they allow a Socialist government there?"

The Australian explained in a very obscure manner, that forty years ago there had been a number of strikes in Australia. The laboring men had got tired of losing strikes, so they had voted in a labor government, and a miner with a name something like Fischer, or something similar to that, had become Prime Minister. And then there had been a miner's strike in Queensland, and this fellow had refused to call out the soldiers when the mine operators had demanded that he do so, and, anyway, that was the sad story of how Australia had got a labor government.

The two Americans shook their heads almost as if in lamentation. Then the young American volunteered the story of his own experiences. Five or six years back, he had come over on a cattle boat. He hadn't, of course, worked his way over, but had paid his passage, going on the cattle boat for the experience. There had been about sixty English cockneys on the boat, and he had talked with every one of them. He had asked them, point blank:

"See here, now, just why are you going back to England where there are two million men out of work, when there's plenty of work to be found in Canada?"

you Americans still have some sound financial and political sense and won't let it happen in your country."

"Of course," the retired American businessman said, "of course, we won't. What I believe, now, I'm an American from Chicago—I ran a profitable business there, wholesale directory—I was kind of in the advertising business until I retired, and I represent the sound American point of view. Well, sirs, now here's what I think. I think if a man's honest, in honest need, he ought to get something, and if there's no one else to give him something, I think he ought to get it from the government. I don't believe in letting a man starve, but a dole—that's something else—it's demoralizing. Demoralizing. England proved that. You give a man something for nothing and he'll never be any good again for work as long as he lives. He should be made to work, damn it, to sweat for what he gets, even if it's nonproductive work. I'd take these here cockneys, and if they wanted a dole, I'd tell them to get the hell out and find a job first, and then, after they had honestly looked for a job, if they didn't get anything, I'd say this, I'd tell 'em: 'All right, now, you take this here shovel and this here pick and you go out in that there prairie over there, and you dig an eight-foot hole.' And then, when they had it dug, I'd say this, I'd say: 'Now, fill it up again.' Just to show 'em that they had to work by the sweat of their brows for what they got, and, I tell you, by that method I'd damn soon cure them of the dole, damned tooting, I would."

"Ah, frightful conditions. The world's in a frightful condition," lamented the Australian.

"The way things are going," the retired American businessman said, "the way things are going, my friends, why, soon there won't even be a concern or a country in the world where a man can invest his money. Take America, the richest country in the world, and, of course," the retired American businessman paused, looked conciliatingly at the Australian, and went on, "of course, we Americans think it's the best country in God's world." The retired American businessman seemed to

sink deeper in his chair, as if by this action he were also sinking into the doldrums of gloom. "I tell you, even in America these days, do you know I couldn't today get more than thirty per cent of what I paid for some of my stocks? And now, since I retired, I make my living on my investments. I ask—what is a man going to do? Why, if things don't change for the better soon, I'll even have to start cutting into my principle, and then, I ask you, where'll I be?" He paused and faced them with determination. "Where'll I be?"

They shook their heads. They nodded him speechless agreement for some seconds, and then the retired American businessman continued:

"I'm beginning to think that the labor people will start learning now that you can't get blood out of a cabbage. Why, if they don't call a halt soon, there might even be a panic in England. Why, money's leaving the country every day, every day. If this keeps up, there won't be any money left, and Johnny Bull'll be ruined." The retired American businessman went on with a certain vindictiveness creeping into his voice. "They're killing their own goose. Times'll get harder, and in hard times it's the millionaire who doesn't have to worry, because, after all, he's got *bis*. It's the laborer who hasn't got anything, and when the laboring men start starving and dying like dogs in the street, they'll turn up a different tail. I tell you, gentlemen, they'll turn up a different tail—then. They'll learn the hard way which side their bread is buttered on, damn well, they'll learn. They'll come crawling on their knees for mercy, and they'll put the skids under demagogues like Lloyd George and Ramsey MacDonald. Damn well, they'll put the skids under them.

The Australian agreed, and then he looked at his watch and remarked that he knew of a fine restaurant, run by an American Negro, where an excellent chicken dinner was to be had most reasonably.

"Not me. I can't stand the sight of a nigger or a Chinaman," the retired American businessman said.

"Well, you can get a jolly good feed there, and the niggers

are only the waiters, and there are some jolly-looking girls who eat there, too," the Australian urged.

"I can't stand the sight of 'em," the retired American businessman said like a man of decision.

"The girls?" asked the Australian with a lascivious smile.

"Oh, old as I am, that's different. No, the niggers," the retired American businessman said.

The Australian rose and started excusing himself, saying he would be off, because he was hungry.

"And, anyway," the retired American businessman said, "I'm worried about my stomach. I like chicken, but now, yesterday, I met a fellow in the American Express, and he was tellin' me that a man in my condition shouldn't eat any chicken. He said I only should eat mutton. But then, you never can tell. Because when I eat mutton, I have gas pains."

"What's the trouble with it?" asked the Australian. "Your stomach," he added.

"I really don't know exactly. Since coming over here, I'm really worried about it."

The Australian spoke cheerfully and suggested that the American consult a doctor.

"But I'm kind of afraid to trust a French doctor. The missus now, she thinks they're okay, and if she thinks they are—then I don't. I been married too long to trust my missus," he said, laughing, but with a singular suggestion of bitterness in his voice.

The Australian spoke some final words of cheer and consolation but failed to dissipate the fear of the retired American businessman.

"Well, gentlemen, cheerio," the Australian said, leaving.

He left, and the young American decided to tag along with him. The retired American businessman sat, reading the latest issues of the *Clarion* that had arrived in Paris. Another American businessman appeared, and they talked about the stock market for awhile. The retired American businessman said that his wife was seeing art galleries or castles or palaces or something today, and that he was free, and the two of them

went out to dinner. The retired American businessman ate a salad, and then his new-found friend left him. Alone, he went to the reading room of another American newspaper and sat there reading. At about four o'clock, he went to sit on the sidewalk of the Café de la Paix to wait for his wife. He looked wistfully at young girls sitting near him, and at others passing along the sidewalk. The gray Paris afternoon waned. He saw his unattractive and aging wife approach, and an expression of boredom and then one of bitterness came over his face. He looked away wistfully and thought of a Russian woman who had come over on the same boat as they. He had looked for her again and again in Paris but hadn't seen her.

His wife joined him and babbled about an afternoon at the Louvre. He didn't listen to her. He bought an English newspaper, which had been flown over to Paris, and sat reading it, while his wife babbled on about her trip to the Louvre and about the guide who had accompanied her. The late afternoon grew gray over gay Paris.

A Summer Morning in Dublin in 1938

IT WAS a muggy morning, warmer than usual for Dublin. The sky was overcast, and the sidewalks were drying after a brief rain. We drove west of Grafton Street on the south bank of the Liffey and stopped before a ruined Georgian house. The street was one of those typical streets of the Dublin slums, wide and treeless and dusty. Dirty slum kids were playing and shouting all over the street. Near by was a row of new model houses that were being completed as part of the slum-clearance program. The block was composed about half of new houses that had not been occupied and half of old and dilapidated Georgian houses. The building we entered was perhaps the worst in the block. The hallway was filthy. Ragged little Irish children looked at us, silent but with curious eyes. My friend knocked at the first door on the left. A slatternly middle-aged housewife, with her hair uncombed, peaked out through a half-opened door. Recognizing my friend as a doctor who was often in the slums, she admitted us.

Since he last had been to this house, there had been a change of tenants. The family that had occupied this room before had moved. It had been a family of nine, and they had lived in this one room. A plague of diphtheria had struck them. The doctor had been called too late. When he had arrived, a two-year-old child was dead in one corner and a five-year-old girl lay dead in another. A boy of eight lay dying in the bed in

which six slept. The boy had since died. The other children had been saved, however. The mother, a Dublin widow, the doctor informed me, was a hard and tough woman, brutalized by her years in the slums. But for once she had broken down. Then this family had moved. In its place was a family of seven. The room was wide and square-shaped, cluttered with household goods; a fire was going in the fireplace. There was a desk in a corner, and odds and ends of clothing were hung about the walls and by the large bed. On the mantelpiece over the fireplace were cheap porcelain figures. There was a small table in the center of the room, close to the bed, on which there were crumbs of bread and a piece of cheese. The walls were lined with large, framed holy pictures, one of the Sacred Heart, another of the Holy Family, others of saints, of Mary, and of Christ. The woman smiled at us perfunctorily. She had bad teeth, and there was a gap where two were missing in the front of her mouth. She told us how many were living there, and then she added.

"And, sir, himself is not working."

"How do you live?"

"Himself gets a pound a week at the labor exchange."

"What rent do you pay?"

"Sure, the agent comes around every week and collects three shillings."

"Who owns this house?"

"Sir, and that nobody does," she said.

She padded about the room on her bare feet. Her youngest child was about a year and a half; he looked up at us, dirty-faced, from the slivery board floor near the fireplace. A toothless grandmother watched us closely and played with her straggling hair.

"Sir, there is no owner," the grandmother said.

"Well, how do they collect rent?"

"The agent, Mr. Longford, does be collecting it every week for Murphy and Johnson."

"Why do you pay it?"

"Sure, and he's here every week collecting three shillings a week from all of us," the mother said.

"And nobody owns it?"

"They do be waiting for to condemn it and tear the building down," the grandmother said.

"Then what will you do?"

"We're waitin' for one of the new houses but, sure, we can't be going outside of the city in one of the new places for, sure, how can we be affording it with himself drawing only a pound a week at the Labor Exchange."

They continued talking about their conditions. The husband had been out of work for a year, and they had been living on his dole. The building was to be demolished, but the real-estate company continued collecting its rent. The two oldest boys slept on the floor. One of them was fourteen, and they were hoping he would find work now and that would help them. They wanted one of the new houses under construction, but they feared they could not afford to move. If the father found work, the carfare from a suburb, where many of the model houses were going up, would eat up too much of the income, what with all the mouths they had to feed.

When we left this apartment, there was a small collection of neighbors waiting for us. Several of the women bowed. They were all shabby, and most of them were dirty. An old woman importuned us.

"Do you want us to look at your apartment?" the doctor asked.

"Doctor, come. Look at what an old woman has to live in. It isn't fit for a human being. I don't be knowing but when the roof is to be on me head in me cottage out back. I moved me bed down to the first floor. Doctor, the roof was on me head," she said.

She let us past the stairway in the musty and odorous hall and out to a stone cottage in the back court, built on the model of many of the country cottages in Ireland. Inside, it was sparsely furnished, and the wall was lined with holy pictures; I looked at a large one of the Sacred Heart. In a small alcove

off the room there was an unmade bed with dirty sheets and a heavy blanket.

"There's me bed now, Doctor. It was fallin' on me, Doctor."

"Did you tell the real-estate people?"

"That I did, and the man told me that he could do nothing for me. The house is condemned," she said.

"Why don't you refuse to pay rent?"

"And the man is here every week, every week, and he takes me three shillings. Come upstairs, Doctor, and, I ask you, is it fit for a human being to be living in?"

She led us up the stairway to the second floor. It was a large, bare room, and there was plaster all over the floor.

"Look, Doctor," she said, going to a corner where she pointed a long and gnarled index finger at the ceiling. The plaster had fallen, and the roof was beginning to collapse.

"It's the same all over the room. Sure, when it rained, I was pelted and I didn't know but when I went to me bed but that I would be finding meself awake with the roof on the top of me," she said.

"How long have you been living here?"

"Twenty years," she said.

"And what does the agent say when you show him these conditions?"

"Sure, and he says what can he do and he only coming for the rent. I pay him three shillings a week. I ask you, Doctor, is this for a human being to be living in? Sure, and it was pelting me with rain, and look, all over, the roof is falling on me old shoulders," she said.

The old woman, like the woman of the family we had just visited, was inured and stupefied in this kind of life. She, like the grandmother and the mother in the front apartment, was patient in her hopelessness. Week after week she had given out three shillings, money mainly obtained by begging in the better sections of Dublin, and in the meantime the house in which she lived had begun to fall down on top of her. She was still patiently waiting—for what?

Outside her cottage was the one toilet, which served the

families in the seven one-room apartments in the building as well as herself; opposite it was a small pump, the only source of water for all this little community. We looked at the toilet. Flies buzzed about it, and the odor of human defecation was unbearable. The plumbing facilities were very old; the seat was dirty; the stone flooring was muddy with dirt, urine, and human excrement. We went back to the house.

A thin, pale woman was waiting for us.

"Doctor, have you seen the place upstairs front yet?"

"No, who's there?"

"Mrs. O'Malley. She has six, and, sure, Doctor, it's a-loive with insects. There's every variety of insect life known to be found in her place, and, sure, Doctor, it's a-loive with them. It's a-loive with them, and the cockroaches. And, Doctor, we would all be eaten by the rats only for our cats," she said.

"You don't have them here?"

"And don't we all have cockroaches?"

"And rats?"

"If it weren't for the cats, I don't know what we'd be doing. But, Doctor, you look upstairs and see Mrs. O'Malley's. Doctor, it's a-loive with every variety of insect life known. Bluebottles and every variety. Sure, Doctor, and isn't Mrs. O'Malley's house like a museum of insect life," she said.

We left this apartment and the building. We drove away, crossing O'Connell bridge and going east on the north bank of the Liffey. We stopped at a building opposite a large waste space where there were old bricks and much refuse.

The house was similar to the other one we had visited. It was old and run down. In the hallway, the plaster was cracking. There were women and children crowded about us in the hallway just as there had been in the other place. We knocked on a door at the entranceway and were admitted.

The mother of the house was a woman of about forty. The doctor had told me something of the history of this family. The father had had consumption and had been in a sanitarium. He had been released. He had returned home. A baby had been born infected, and it had died. A young boy had died of con-

sumption. The father had died. Now there were five in the family, three children, the mother, and an adopted daughter of eighteen who had already started to whore. The barefooted mother wore a ragged dress and a dirty apron. She looked at us meekly. The girl was plump and plain-faced. The doctor asked the mother how everyone was. She said that she was not feeling any too well herself and pointed to the adopted daughter, remarking that the girl had been away for a few days and had spit blood. And the young boy, Tommy, was not feeling any too well, either. He was coughing badly these days, and, as she talked, she herself was racked with coughing. I looked around the house. The differences in these one-room apartments in the Dublin slums are minor. All are fairly large rooms, but they seem smaller because so much is crowded into them: one or two beds, a table, sometimes a desk, all the family possessions, and the inevitable framed holy pictures. This one was no different. The large bed was the same bed in which two of the children and the father had died.

"Haven't you tried to get out of here?"

"That I did. And here, I have the letter they sent me," the mother said.

She dug among papers in a corner and fished out a letter to show us. The letter stated that her application for one of the new homes being built had been received and filed under the heading of families of five living in one room. That was all. She was patiently waiting. She stood patiently before us.

"How do you live in here?"

"Sure, and we do. One of the boys sleeps here on the floor, and, you know, it isn't good for him, him, with the coughs coming on him, and it is cold in here," she said.

"And the rest of you sleep in the bed?"

"Yes, sir. Himself died in that bed," she said.

Her story went on in the same vein as the other stories. The little boy had a flushed face and coughed in a crouplike manner. The girl coughed. The mother coughed again. It seemed fairly plain that the entire family was eaten with consumption and that its fate would be that of the father.

We were no sooner outside than a thin woman was asking us to see her place at the top. We climbed two flights of rickety stairs and entered a rectangular room. A boy of fifteen sat on a box by the fire, smoking a cigarette; he was shoeless and wore stockings with big holes in them. The mother picked up a baby and held it. There were the holy pictures, the clothes on hooks on the wall, the musty odors, the dirt. There were tea bowls, a hunk of bread, and a small slab of cheese on the table.

"Doctor, it's coming down on us. Look there. The roof is coming through," she said, pointing to a portion of the ceiling where the plaster had broken. We looked and saw that it was breaking and that it was no protection from the inevitable and regular Dublin rains.

"Doctor, will you look at him?" the mother said, pointing to a boy.

"What happened to him?"

"He was playing over across the street, and a wall fell on him. Sure, we thought he would be dead or never have the use of his limbs again. The man came around and gave me ten pounds for not going into the court," she said.

"Why didn't you go to court?"

"The man came and gave me ten pounds for not going into the court," she said.

She looked at the boy.

"Show the doctor."

He took down his trousers, and we could see where he was healing after an operation. The bones in his thigh had been split but were now knitting. The doctor said that he was all right, but that the boy should come to see him.

"Can't you do anything, all of you not pay rent and make them do something for you?"

"Sure, the man comes around every week and collects three shillings off us, and, Doctor, I ask you, is this a place fit to live in? Doctor, we can't eat, what with the torment of the flies, and then cockroaches are always on top of us. And when we do be eating, sure, and doesn't the plaster be falling into our tea? I ask you, Doctor, is this a place to live in?"

Again, the same hopeless story. After we left, we went downstairs, and a small, spiritless man in a shabby blue suit asked us to look at his apartment. It was on the first floor, to the left of the entrance, and it was smaller than the others we had seen. There was a fire going, a table in the corner, a bed on one side, and a small cot on the other. The wife was thin and worn, with sallow and unhealthy skin. She wore a red shawl and held an undernourished infant in her arms, the baby looking quiet, curious, dirty-faced at us.

"How many of you live here?"

"Eleven of us. Six of us sleep in this bed, three in the cot, and my two oldest boys sleep on the floor," the man said in a quiet, gentle voice.

"Are you working?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where?"

"Down at the docks."

"What do you earn?"

"Three pounds a week. One of the boys, my oldest, is working now and brings in a pound. And the girl here," he said, pointing to a thin girl of about seventeen, "she was working until things got slack."

"How long have you lived here?"

"Twenty-four years, sir."

"Have you applied for one of the new houses?"

"Yes, sir, but there doesn't seem to be any room for us."

"You pay rent?"

"Three shillings a week, sir."

The doctor looked at the baby and asked the mother to bring it to see him. The baby was quiet; its face was pallid and its color unhealthy.

"Where was it born?"

She pointed to the large bed in which six of the family slept.

"There, on Christmas Eve. It's eight months old, sir."

The man showed us the window.

"Sir, in winter, it doesn't keep out the cold, and the two

boys sleep there on the floor, but it is not good for them," he said.

They faced us patiently.

What was there to say to them? Patiently, for years, the woman, like so many of her Dublin sisters, had been breeding like an animal. Patiently, the man had been working for years for a few pounds a week. There they were. I realized that they were only one family of the ninety thousands in the Dublin slums. Here these people were, in the wide streets, in the crumbling old Georgian houses, living in filth. Here was disease and undernourishment, rickets and filth. Here new generations were being spawned.

We left. I walked about later in these districts. Wide drab streets. Unkempt women, dirty, playing children, patient little men on corners. There is a lace curtain in every window, and there are shrines and holy pictures in every house. There is a public house on most corners throughout the section. Here these people have lived like their fathers and forefathers and their forefathers before them. Ireland has risen again and again. The Ascendancy crowd has left Ireland. The Sinn Feiners have come into power. The newspapers are full of the work and future of the new Ireland, the commemoration of the Revolution, and still these ninety thousands live in the Dublin slums. On a summer morning in Dublin one can walk north of the Liffey and there are the ancient Georgian houses, the lace curtains in the windows, the toothless old grandmothers with their black shawls, the mothers worn out and beginning to lose their teeth at the age of thirty, the ragged, pasty-faced children, the little girls of six, seven, ten, wheeling unwashed infants in creaky baby carriages. And if one goes inside these houses, one sees the filthy toilets, the little pump serving all with water, the dirty and slivery floors, the crowded rooms with the unmade musty beds, the holy pictures and saintly statues, the flies and tea bowls and cheese and hunks of bread, and one hears these people talk patiently of how they live, one sees them patiently living, patiently waiting with all of the blessed meekness of the poor.

I went back and wandered through these same sections again and again while I was in Dublin that summer. I thought of these people, and of poverty in Paris and London from which I had come, of poverty back in Chicago, in New York, of the world ringed with cities in which people live like this, and have lived like this for generations. New deals, new Irelands, these have and will come and go, and these people and their children and their children's children will go on living and suffering like this until they, they and all of their brothers, rise up in their own might and take their destiny in their own hands. Now it is almost seven years since that summer morning in Dublin when my doctor friend and I visited these people.

The thoughts that I had on that morning in Dublin, the thoughts that I had going back to that section, these return to me. These people will rot in meekness until they rise up and fight. This is the real fight, the only fight for humanity.

John Hitchcock

I

JOHN HITCHCOCK said nothing to Ethel when he entered their one-room flat in Greenwich Village. It was a small room in an old building, inhabited principally by large and noisy Italian families, who always seemed to shout when talking and who usually filled the courtyard with cooking odors. John had come to associate these present surroundings with the smell of garlic. In one corner of the room there was a bed from which John had sawed off the legs, to give it the appearance of a studio couch. His portable typewriter was on a small, unvarnished wooden table in another corner by one of the windows which overlooked the inner court. Papers, manuscripts, and letters were scattered about near the typewriter; facing the chair by the table at which he sat to work there were home-made shelves with books heaped on them in a disorderly fashion. A larger old table in the center of the room was covered with oilcloth. Lighted kerosene lamps stood on this, as well as on the smaller table. A stove, needing polish, was in a corner opposite the bed.

"What happened?" Ethel asked him after he had entered, silent and grim.

In answer, he merely shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose that you didn't get any books to review?"

"You guessed right, darling," he said spiritlessly, plunking down in an old chair and lighting a cigarette he had drawn from his crumpled package of Wings.

"I hate those editors and literary people," she said.

"Well, I couldn't go so far as to say they hate me. They don't even seem to know I exist," he said.

"You've got to make them know you. And you will. You'll make them sing another tune when your book's finished. You've got to work on it more," she said.

"I've got to live, also."

She went to him and kissed him.

"I know you're going to write the most wonderful things. And then we won't forget those who didn't help you and recognize you when they might have."

"What have we got for supper?" he asked.

"Spaghetti."

"Well, it's good we've got at least that."

"Isn't there any news or gossip?" she asked.

He nodded his head from side to side disinterestedly.

"You never come home and tell me anything," she complained, pouting her lips.

"What's there to tell?" he asked, squashing his cigarette.

"But you do get around to offices, and you see editors and writers, and surely there must be some news and gossip," she said.

"What news? I go to an office and wait outside a door for a half hour, and then I see an editor or his secretary for maybe a half a minute and I'm told they have nothing for me to do. They suggest that I come around some other time, merely to soften the blow," he said.

"You could ask questions and keep your eyes open. You might hear of some job," she said in a criticizing tone.

"What the hell good is gossip?" he asked.

"Sometimes, I hate you," she shouted.

"Today you're going strong on hates, Ethel."

"You needn't be sarcastic."

"I'm not, I'm merely factual."

"If you put some of that cleverness into book reviews instead of wasting it at my expense, we'd be better off—we wouldn't have to live in a dump like this," she said in a temper.

"Oh, I did hear something," he said.

"What?" she asked, her anger evaporating into girlish curiosity.

"Bob is getting a job writing in Hollywood. He'll start at two hundred and fifty a week."

She turned livid. Then her expression of contempt almost unmanned him. It re-emphasized to him his own sense of failure.

"Why did he get it?" she asked with impetuous anger.

"They called him," he said with a shrug.

"You could be sure it would always be somebody else besides you who gets a job."

"What have I got to do with it?" he asked.

"You could get some kind of a job. Others do. I'm god-damned sick and tired of starving for your genius—not having the things that other writers' wives have."

"I'm not a genius and I don't enjoy starving any better than you do," he said curtly.

"Then why don't you do something about it?" she asked, her voice throbbing with nervousness.

"I can't help it if there's a depression. We got along all right until this damned depression came, didn't we? Well, I didn't cause it."

"Now, you're talking like a Communist. Why don't you go out and make a speech at Union Square?" she sneered.

"Because I don't believe in it, that's why."

"Let me tell you one thing, Jack Hitchcock. I'll put up with a lot because I love you, but there's one thing I won't. If you become a Communist, I'll leave you."

"Dear, you know I don't agree with the Communists," his tone becoming suddenly persuasive. "I respect some of them for their sincerity, but I don't believe in what they say. They think literature is propaganda, and I don't, and they think that morality is bourgeois, and I don't," he said.

"I don't know what they talk about, but I don't like them," she said.

"Well, darling, let's have some more spaghetti. I'll go around

to *The Modern Liberal* tomorrow. Maybe I'll get a book or two for review," he said.

She went to the stove behind a curtain on the side of the room and started to cook supper.

II

In his student days, John Hitchcock had been a promising young writer on the campus of the University of Ohio, where he had majored in English Literature. He had scorned the idea of taking courses in the social and natural sciences and had associated mainly with other students whose interests also were purely literary. His father, a moderately successful lawyer with liberal social and political views, had wanted John to study law. But he had revolted. The father had then consented to John's proposal that he become a schoolteacher. But John quickly abandoned this aim and determined he would sink or swim by going to New York to write. He and Ethel, his high-school sweetheart, had eloped immediately after John's graduation. With high youthful hopes and expectations, John had then taken his pretty blond bride to New York. Several poems and sketches of his were accepted and published in little magazines. Such success had been inordinately encouraging, and he had naïvely expected to rise rapidly as a successful new writer.

Arriving in New York, he had had to find work instantly. His first job was in a bookstore, and from there he had gone into an advertising office, where he had earned fifty dollars a week. He began working on an autobiographical first novel. He struggled with it for more than two years. On its completion, it was refused by several publishing houses; but their letters of rejection did encourage him to go on writing. He diligently revised his book, but it was rejected again. John quickly learned that in New York the best way to break into the literary game was by reviewing books. He started going around to get books to review and in time was able to get an occasional

review here and there. His first reviews were like those of most beginners. They were imitative of popular reviewers and were pretentious and immature. However, editors told him that these reviews were good. At first he would read the novels he was assigned very carefully; he would be anxious and nervous. He did not want to be shown up. He was afraid he might misunderstand the novel. He wanted to write a good review so that he would be able to receive more books, and to build up a following.

Book reviewing paid badly. He had considered it to be prestige and apprenticeship work. He had his job in the advertising agency, and that permitted the two of them to go on living comfortably, if not extravagantly. Theirs was a life full of love and hope. He reviewed books for several years, and gradually came to know all the important editors in New York and was able to get books from them from time to time. In 1931, he was suddenly discharged by the advertising agency. Unable to find other work, he had to depend on book reviewing for his livelihood. Then the meaning of this work acquired a different and more serious significance. Almost overnight there was a change in his consciousness, and this change affected not only his judgment of books but the way he felt about and acted toward editors. Fear and insecurity almost never left his mind. Asking for books now was no different from hunting for work. In literary offices he tried to be subtly flattering, to make a good impression. He and his wife tried to cultivate anyone who would help him in his career.

Living by his pen became dreary, arduous, and continuously insecure. When he wrote, he was rushed and uncertain. He had to get his work done very promptly, often to meet deadlines, and the sooner his reviews were finished and the more quickly they were printed, the sooner he would get his check. And these checks were now of paramount importance to him. His savings dwindled. They had moved to poorer quarters, in the Village. In time, they'd fallen behind in the payment of electric and gas bills. Their electricity was shut off. They no

longer could afford the luxury of a telephone. They had to revise their way of life drastically.

Hurried and harried, Jack was unable to work steadily on his novel. He had to spend the best portion of from two to three days a week tramping about to magazine and newspaper offices. When he was given books, he had to go home, read them as fast as he could, and write his reviews. His reading, outside of work, was mainly devoted to a study of the work of other book reviewers and of those current books that were being talked about. He had to keep in the swim and learn. He could not be out of fashion, and he could not make "mistakes" on books, lest this hinder him in getting more review assignments. He was caught in a vicious circle, and the best he could get out of it was a mere subsistence living. Insecurity crept into his life until it became a constant, invariant fear of the future. This fear, plus the various related circumstances of his life, began subtly to change his personality. He began to lose even his self-respect, and repeatedly he questioned himself concerning his talents. He was becoming envious and jealous. He gave way to his emotions, to waves of hates which seemed to be uncharacteristic of his nature. He envied rival reviewers who got more work and made more money. He hated writers who were successful, especially if they were young. But for business reasons he dared not allow himself to express these hates and envies and jealousies publicly. If he did, he might possibly make enemies. He was too insecure to enjoy this luxury. Often now he day dreamed sentimentally of the time when he would "arrive." But each day dragged itself out, making new assaults on his character and his personality; each day seemed to dawn and die with that same insecurity constantly preying upon him.

III

After eating, John sat reading by lamplight. There was a knock on the door. He yelled for whoever it was to come in. It was his neighbor, Irv. Irv was a young Communist of

twenty-eight who had written poems in *Humanity* and other left-wing magazines exhorting the workers to revolt and to give all power to nonexistent American Soviets.

"Well, how is your dialectical theology?" John asked superciliously.

Ethel frowned.

"It's not theology. It's dialectics, proletarian science," Irv replied almost solemnly.

"It's too complicated for me," said John.

"That's because you're a petty bourgeois intellectual, in the pay of the capitalist press."

"And it's damned good pay, too. Look around and see how good the pay is, Irv," John said, with his hurt voice betraying the levity of his words.

"But you haven't abandoned your belief in the myth that the individual counts. You haven't learned what all proletarians know instinctively—to sink your little individuality in the mass," Irv said.

Ethel looked annoyed. She bit her lips.

"Got a cigarette?" Irv asked.

John offered him the crumpled package of Wings. Irv took one, lit it, dropped the match on the floor, and handed the package back to John. Ethel rose, said nothing, walked noisily over to them, picked up the match, and put it in an ashtray. Irv looked at her, his face blank.

"Irv, you don't really think we're going to have a revolution in America in our lifetime, do you?" John said with semi-contempt.

"Of course not," said Ethel sharply.

"The workers will not consult you about the Revolution; they will have to free mankind," Irv answered.

"I suppose you think there'll be those Soviets in Brooklyn?" Ethel said sarcastically.

"There will be Soviets in Brooklyn," Irv said with humorless conviction.

Ethel frowned again. She went to a corner and, setting a lamp beside her, began reading a detective story. John began

explaining to Irv that he admired the Communists for their sincerity but that he did not agree with them that all literature was propaganda. Irv asserted that it was and wouldn't give John much time to defend his views; Irv kept asserting over and over again that literature was on the barricades, and that if the writer was not for the workers, he was against them. He accused John of being an agent of the bourgeoisie.

"Look, I don't even get electricity for being an agent," John said.

"Light?" Irv asked.

"Sure, they shut it off because I couldn't pay my bills. I certainly am collecting plenty from the bourgeoisie, am I not?"

"Oh, I can fix that for you," Irv said.

"How, by making the Revolution tomorrow morning?" asked John.

"I can fix it. One of the comrades knows how to fix the box downstairs."

"You're not kidding me?" John said.

"Will we get in trouble?" Ethel asked anxiously.

"You don't know anything about it. And neither does the capitalistic electric light company. I'll fix that. I'll send a comrade around. He does that every day for the workers oppressed by the capitalists," Irv said.

They talked on, and Irv continued his attack on John as a petty bourgeois.

IV

Irv's comrade did fix the meter, and they had electricity. At first, they were frightened. Ethel was sure they would be sent to jail. But nothing happened, and after the kerosene lamps, electric light was a sensuous pleasure for them. They became accustomed to having electricity again. Occasionally, John would grow anxious. Sometimes he would be walking the streets, perhaps empty-handed, perhaps with books to review under his arm, and he would suddenly think of the

electricity he was getting illegally and illegitimately. He would go through imagined scenes with representatives of the electric-light company and the police, and he would imagine himself answering their questions, knowing nothing about what had happened. He would be frozen in fear, and he would be apprehensive, even expecting the worst to happen to him. He would imagine himself in jail. But then, as a form of inner release, he would sometimes tell himself that jail was preferable to the life of uncertainty he now had to lead.

Many writers, some of whom John knew, some of whom he knew by reputation, had gone Left. In the circles in which he moved, Marxism, Revolution, the Communist Party, were constant subjects of loud discussion. Often the discussions were pitched in such a key as to suggest that the American social Revolution was imminent. The talk often lasted for hours; generally the anger and heat of the debate was in proportion to the ignorance and anxiety of those talking. Few of those who participated in these discussions were well read in Marxism; few knew the history of the Russian Revolution; and the level of the discussions was generally rigid, sloganistic. The Communists and the fellow travelers who defended the Party line consistently spoke with great confidence and self-assurance, with, literally, the conceit of history in their voices. This gave them an advantage over opponents. They took the offensive and aggressively asserted the shibboleths of the Party line. They said flatly that those who disagreed with them were immoral. Those who disagreed were generally in a state of confusion and worry. Most of them were in circumstances essentially similar to those in which John found himself. They were declassed intellectuals. They wanted to be writers, critics, employees in publishing houses, figures in the literary life of New York. Times were bad, very bad in the publishing business. America was in the depths of the Hoover era. There was widespread unemployment. There were riots, starvation, hunger marches. American economy was shaken. The future looked miserable. The declassed intellectuals were insecure, shaky, worried. They did not know where to turn.

The effort to survive harried them, warped their character. Communists and fellow travelers spoke to them with assurance and self-confidence, convinced that they were absolutely right. Young men such as John had no convictions of certitude. They could not answer their opponents at these informal parties, in restaurants over cups of coffee, in dingy rooms and apartments in the Greenwich Village and Union Square areas.

The intellectual uncertainty which almost paralyzed John's consciousness was a parallel to the economic insecurity he faced every day. Not knowing where he was going, he was becoming more and more uncertain about where the world was going. Unable to convince himself and deeply to believe that the Communists were right and that he could become one of them, nevertheless, he was always feeling qualms of guilt in their presence. He was apologizing for not agreeing with them and becoming a comrade. And the subjects they discussed, the issues they raised, left him in a fog. He had mainly read works of *belles-lettres*, and politics was the subject generally under discussion. If literature was discussed, it was generally presented in its real or alleged interconnections with politics. He was in a dense cloud of ignorance when the Marxian theory of surplus value was mentioned. He was lost in strange words whenever dialectical materialism was referred to. Marxian terminology was stranger to him than it was even to those new converts who were flinging it at him with such superb self-confidence and aplomb.

In these discussions Ethel became a hindrance, almost a total deadweight. He could not think honestly on the subjects raised by the new leftism in his circle because she was so uncompromisingly against the Communists and so emotionally involved in her opposition. If he made concessions to the comrades in an argument, he was sure, when he and she were home alone, to pay for his concessions. She would berate him with sarcasm and with sneers about his failure. She would work herself into fits, sobbing, tearful, even hysterical, and in this state she would scream at him that he could choose between her and the Revolution. And he would try to pet and mollify her and tell her

that of course he didn't give a damn about the Revolution and that he was against the Communists. She would say that they were fools, and he would agree with her.

But there was no way out for him. He was miserable, unhappy, insidiously losing his confidence in himself.

V

"What about your individuality?" she screamed at him one night.

He didn't know what to answer. They had been quarreling for an hour; accusations and counteraccusations had been hurled back and forth. The discussion had long since passed the point where anything either one said could change the other's mind. John lit his last cigarette. He thought of giving in to her, but he was so angry that he wouldn't. He puffed on the cigarette, seeking distraction in it. Smoking gave him something to do.

"Answer me!" she screamed.

"Answer you—what?" he shouted back.

"Individuality!" she yelled.

He looked about their dreary home. He thought of the way he tramped the streets, of his petty anxieties, trepidations, worries he had when he did get a book to review, and managed to get the review written. For he might say something that wouldn't be acceptable to the paper for which he was writing. He couldn't say what he wanted to in his reviews. Suddenly he realized that he was afraid. And he looked at Ethel. Her face was contorted. In anger, she was unattractive. He no longer loved her, he told himself, and this thought saddened him. She was afraid. He thought of the two of them, and of the bright hopes of their early love. All gone! Yes, gone! Gone as was the prosperity of a couple of years ago. And here they were, with no way out, with no hope, and they were screaming hatefully at each other.

"What the hell individuality have we got?" he asked her.

"I'm sorry. Forgive me. I made a mistake. I thought that you had individuality. I was wrong," she said with such an elaborate effort at being sarcastic that he again felt sorry for her.

What would they do? What would he do?

"You were posing all these years. You can't write. You have no guts."

"But you're afraid I might become a revolutionist. And yet you say I have no courage," he answered.

"You a revolutionist?" she screamed, and then she laughed violently, hysterically.

He clenched his fists and jumped out of his chair. He sagged back in his chair. He couldn't hit her. His hands relaxed.

"Oh, let's drop it," he said wearily.

"Yes, but how are we going to eat?"

He had no answer. He puffed on his cigarette. He wanted to get every bit of enjoyment he could out of it. His last cigarette.

He decided not to pay any attention to her. She screamed at him. He pretended not to hear. And yet he was hurt, profoundly hurt. Finally she sank into a chair and sobbed. He said nothing. Here they were, alone in this damned Greenwich Village room. It was dark and chilly outside. New York was cold these days, cold in many ways. He was becoming so seclusive that he didn't even want to go out. He was almost reaching the point where he was afraid to walk on the streets.

Suddenly Ethel flung herself into his arms, kissed him passionately, and begged forgiveness. He kissed her but felt nothing. They undressed and crawled into bed. But this was no comfort, either. Afterward, he lay beside her, tired, dull, thinking that everything was gone—hope, prospects, everything. What should he do? He was one mere individual who wanted to write, and he saw that this tremendous and complicated society seemed to have gone to pot with its millions out of work, its breadlines, its misery. If only he could blot all thought out of his mind.

She sobbed.

"Don't worry. We'll pull through somehow," he said, patting her.

"Oh, kiss me, darling. There's nothing else to do," she said.

He kissed her. She clung to him passionately, kissed him hysterically, and he let her and pretended to kiss her with passion.

But what could he do?

Again he lay back, tired. She was quiet now, sleepy. He couldn't sleep. He lay in bed. The darkness seemed so strange. Yes, how alone he was! How frightened! He was as afraid as she was. He was afraid of life.

He wished he were old, that he were at the end of his life. He thought how the old were the lucky ones. They had so little to go through. They didn't have to face this terrible future that he, that the youth of America like himself, had inherited.

Yes, he wished he were an old man who didn't have to fight, didn't have to look at a world of depression, depression and misery which offered only war, the promise of one kind of war or another kind, imperialist war or revolutionary war. Bloodshed and suffering was all one could look forward to, and he had wanted something else, had wanted to find joy and fame in art.

Ethel snored. The snore disturbed him. It was the last straw breaking their now frail romance. Then she breathed quietly. He began to pet her. He woke her up with kisses. Now he was passionate, almost hysterically passionate. If he could find nothing else, he could try to find something in this. He tried vainly to find forgetfulness in her arms.

And as he tried, he kept thinking to himself— Nothing! Nothing! Nothing!

The Virginians Are Coming

I

THE CAMPUS seemed different. Roland knew that it was really he who was different, but he objectified this change in himself by attributing it to the campus. The buildings with their towers and turrets were all the same now, as he looked at them through a cold drizzle and against the background of a dark gray and foggy sky. Once he had associated these buildings, these piles of churchly gray, with his own aspirations. He remembered so many sunny days when as a student he had seen these Gothic towers rising toward a clear and vast blue sky as if they had been a stone expression of his own hopes. And now these hopes and aspirations seemed dead, and these towers were unfriendly and different.

Roland felt intensely lonely and out of place walking aimlessly about the campus, along paths but recently cleared of snow; the snow had been shoveled into dirty piles along the pavement. The students going about their business seemed very familiar, but though he recognized many faces, he saw no one whom he knew. He wanted to meet some friend, some acquaintance. He wanted to talk, and in talk to forget his own problems. He was discouraged after his recent weeks of fruitless job-hunting. Graduating last June, he had been confident and enthusiastic, even cocky, at the same time he had regretted leaving college. Yes, he had looked forward to going out into the world and working. Graduation had meant that he no longer would have to be dependent on his parents. Appreciat-

ing all that they had done for him, he had none the less felt uneasy because he hadn't been supporting himself. He had had his fun in college, he felt. And college had been of great benefit to him. But at the same time he had so often regarded it as play, as an imitation of living instead of real living. His desire to stand on his own feet and to make his own way in life had helped him to assimilate his regret and nostalgia about leaving the campus. But, then, all that belonged to the spring of 1929. Now it was 1930. This, too, explained why the campus appeared so different to him. The confidence, the spirit of adventure he had had when starting out last summer to find work, work which would set him off on his life career—this, also, belonged to 1929, not to 1930. Yes, then he had imagined that he was going out to become a man, and a success in life. Now he did not feel this way. Now he was lacking in confidence. He felt hurt, disappointed, even betrayed.

He could no longer go down to the Loop in search of work and regard the trip as an adventure. Day after day he'd gone to employment bureaus, to offices, to personnel departments and he had come away with nothing tangible. His optimism was gone. After the stock market crash in November, he'd continued his morning pilgrimages, but with a growing sense of shame and of defeat. And here he was still living off his parents. They had paid for his education. They had given him opportunities in life far beyond what they had had. He had his bachelor's degree. He had gone out into the world. And he couldn't get a job. He was now beginning to realize that he had been trained for nothing. He had no specific preparation to help him earn his bread and butter. He was still a dependant. In such a plight how could he have any pride or confidence in himself? Every morning his father, without comment, gave him a dollar and he accepted it in a mood of humiliation. It was clear to Roland that his father was disappointed in him.

He was now ready to take any job he could get. The high opinion he had had of his own merits and value when he had sought employment immediately after graduation—this, also, was changed. At times he even thought that his education and

his degree were worthless. Some employment managers, on hearing him mention that he was a college graduate, immediately had been on their guard and had talked to him in tones of ill-concealed jealousy. More than once he had received less consideration than grammar-school graduates. He was beginning to believe that his education was a handicap. And in ironical moods he would reflect that here he was, a young man who appreciated Fielding and Landor, who was avid for opera and for Brahms, who had read Hazlitt on painting, not to mention Shakespeare and Marlowe, and yet he couldn't find a twenty-dollar a week job. No one would hire him to sell bonds or advertising, to be a file clerk, to work in a gas station or a hotel. So far, no one would hire him at all. With all his relative cultural superiority, his business experience was limited to what little he had learned holding down unimportant office jobs during summer vacations.

In college Roland had often thought of becoming a teacher. A pedagogical career now seemed to be less of a possibility than getting some low-paying routine job. The courses in Education which he'd taken seemed to have been an especial waste of time and money. And he had got very little out of these courses. He had slaved out English model programs for high-school and college students, and he had more than once worn himself ragged over teachers' examination books, which illustrated various methods of testing and grading students. Yes, he had squandered hours and hours on useless work in Education courses. Such work had been classified as scientific method. Looking back on it, it seemed like sheer lunacy. Again and again he had had to read textbooks on how to teach a subject without having the time to assimilate the actual material constituting that subject. How many novels that he hadn't read had he put on reading lists for students in a class assignment? The Dean of the Education Department had promised Roland that he would find him a teaching job after graduation. But busy deans often make promises. And there was plenty of competition these days for teaching jobs. Roland had finally abandoned his teaching plans, at least tem-

porarily. He had then convinced himself that experience in some line of business endeavor would be more profitable and more satisfying. And, despite all discouragement, he still sometimes believed this—if he could only get the *right opportunity*. After he worked a while, if he could get a job, then he thought that he might go back to school for a doctor's degree. If he did decide to teach, a doctor's degree would help him get a better job.

A few weeks ago he had almost got a job as a filing clerk in an advertising agency. He had filled out an application blank hopefully and had convinced himself that advertising was a promising business, a good one for an ambitious young man to get into. Although the actual job was almost menial, and the salary would have been only eighty-five dollars a month, still he had seen this as a truly promising opening. But he hadn't been given the job; it went to a grammar-school graduate. And even more disheartening had been the time when he had tried for the editorship of a trade journal. He had planned on what he would do with the journal—daydreams of how he would then be free. And he had not got that job, either.

As a student Roland usually had become irritated when he'd heard others poke fun at the Babbitts. He had always argued that there were not many Babbitts in the world, and that Sinclair Lewis's novel was overdone and not truly representative. But, seeking work, he began to discover that he had been wrong. Whether his student friends realized it or not, they had been referring to a situation that was not at all uncommon. Businessmen, employment managers, personnel geniuses, department heads, chief clerks had again and again seemed to him to be nothing more than Babbitts, loquaciously talking of ambition, service, and the religion of business at a time when millions were out of work and there were fewer and fewer careers being opened up to young men who wanted a business future. Many of them had the incurable habit of giving meaningless and gratuitous advice to young men who wanted only a job. And on their desks or walls he had seen mottoes eulogizing the value of time and bespeaking the supreme folly of wasting

it. And yet they had talked at length, advising him to struggle and to persevere, to remember that business was not only a means of earning money but also a community service demanding the dedication of a young man's finest ideals. Some of them had gone from advice to boasting and had bragged of their own rise in the world, and this while others waited to see them and while Roland was anxious to go to another place in the apparently hopeless quest. More than one minor executive, who probably earned from two hundred to two hundred and fifty dollars a month, had told Roland, with excruciatingly boring detail, of how he had come to be what he was, of how, lacking the benefits and advantages of a college education, he had plugged on and on until his ambition, integrity, and zest for hard work had lifted him to a position of authority. One executive with saggy jowls had even escorted Roland out of the office in a mysterious manner, and, in a hallway, pointed to a picture of a hunchback. He had asked Roland to guess who the hunchback was. Then he had brought Roland back to his office, given him a cigar, and talked for three-quarters of an hour, telling him how the hunchback had risen from office boy to the presidency of the corporation. But he had not hired Roland.

Roland now was beginning to shrink from looking for work; pounding sidewalks day after day, he would find himself walking very slowly and letting his mind wander in a kind of vague reverie. He would pull up suddenly and not even know what had been passing through his mind. And he had come to project his own failure into the human race. Everything about the city now seemed sad. He looked on people differently than he had formerly. They always seemed sad. Seeing the crowds on the Illinois Central train when he rode downtown in the morning, he saw everyone as sad, unhappy, frustrated. He imagined the problems they must have to face, frustrations which gnawed at them, disappointments which troubled them like ever recurring and unhappy dreams. He imagined many of the middle-aged and elderly men as automatons, all of whose spirit and spontaneity had long ago been drowned in

office inkwells. The middle-aged and elderly women often were, to be sure, frustrated, unmarried, miserable old maids. The young men were on the way to becoming what the older men already were. The girls would have to marry fellows with little money, raise families, and lose all their youth and beauty. Likewise, he began to hate and to dread the crowds. The city took on an aspect of coldness and brutality. Many times he thought of Carl Sandburg's poem about Chicago, liking the part that referred to the city as hog butcher and toolmaker but feeling that there was no longer energy and youth to the city. He saw himself as a young man with no place in the world, and often this feeling was generalized. Nobody had any place in the world. It was all futile. The life of man was futile.

This morning he had got out of bed, feeling he was whipped, whipped completely, like a prize fighter who had been counted out in the first round before he even had had a chance to get a punch past his opponent's guard. He had taken more time than usual washing, shaving, dressing, and eating breakfast, and had feebly entertained banal daydreams of worldly success. He'd done everything he could to delay the moment when he would leave home and go over to the I.C. station for a downtown train. Finally he had decided that he would skip looking for work for the day, and immediately his mood had lightened. He would go over to the campus, hang around, see old friends. And maybe, too, he had hoped, he would run into someone who would give him a good tip about a job. And then there was a poetry recital in the evening that he wanted to attend. Now he was wandering around the campus, feeling as out of place on it as he felt out of place in the city and its life when he tramped the Loop going from office building to office building.

II

The first person he saw whom he knew on the campus was Foster. He and Foster had been good friends back in their fresh-

man year. Since then, they had drifted apart. Foster had become a sudden success, and some had even looked upon him as a kind of boy wonder of the campus. Before he had completed his sophomore year, he was publishing wistful, transiently charming and somewhat conventional adolescent poetry in national magazines. After two years of college, Foster had quit school and plunged into the writing of his first book. It had been a collaboration, done in imitation of a best seller, but it had sold ten thousand copies. Now he lectured before women's clubs, worked on a daily newspaper as a reporter, and sold rather imitative poems and stories to New York magazines. He earned about a hundred dollars a week, was married, had a baby, and his future seemed assured. He had a squeaky voice which was changing into the voice of a mature man, was round-faced, and had baby-blue eyes. Facing him, Roland felt inferior, because Foster was on his way to success, while he wasn't. Roland became disturbingly self-conscious; his mood was apologetic. He wished he hadn't met Foster. Roland himself had wanted to be a writer back in that freshman year, but since then he had come to learn that he lacked the talent.

"Still getting educated, Roland?" Foster asked, and Roland sensed a superiority and a cockiness behind Foster's words. He resented it.

"No, I came to look around the campus and see some friends. Are you going to the recital tonight?"

"I don't go to recitals. Since I started lecturing to women's clubs, I can't get interested in that racket. It's all right when you're a kid in college, but after you get out and are launched on your own career, it's the bunk. I can meet writers without having to go to recitals to see what they look like. As a matter of fact, one of the assignments I now get regularly is to interview writers," he said.

"What are you writing now?"

"A gangster story," Foster said.

Roland reflected that Foster knew practically nothing about gangsters and probably had never seen a gangster in his life.

There was an uncertain, brief silence between them.

"What are you doing Roland?"

"Oh, nothing much, Foster. I'm thinking of coming back and getting a master's degree," Roland said.

"I don't see the use of it for myself. You see all these buildings and all this knowledge around here," Foster said, gesturing sweepingly. "It didn't help me any. I haven't any degrees," he added.

Foster's remark irritated Roland. And at the same time, he envied him. Yes, Foster was becoming a success. He wasn't. They strolled on across the campus and said nothing. As they neared the Coffee Shop, Foster offered to treat Roland to tea, but Roland refused. He was too uneasy with Foster. He was relieved when they parted. Then he reflected that Foster was now beyond learning because of his conceit. But immediately he condemned himself. What did he know, and who was he, to be criticizing others?

III

Wondering what he would do, he strolled back across the campus. He met Catherine in front of the bookstore. She was a fragile girl, shabby in her brown cloth coat. Whenever he saw her, she excited his sympathy. He thought of her as a poor, sweet kid who needed some kind of decent fellow to marry her and take care of her, appreciating her fragility, giving her happiness that would compensate for her misfortunes, and affording her social opportunities which the poverty of her parents had prevented her from having. His friend Jack liked her and might be the one, he thought. He would see Jack this afternoon.

Catherine was a campus poet. She wrote delicate verse which seemed to Roland to be almost bodiless and utterly spiritual and ethereal. He considered her a much finer poet than Foster, and thought that she would go much farther. Standing with her now, he thought of her poetry. Exquisite was the word

he used to describe it to himself. And, seeing her, he found welling up in him a sudden desire to talk—an impulse to explain himself to her. He told himself that she had known suffering. It must have made her very understanding. If he could explain himself to her, she ought to understand. But he was unable to say anything.

She had greeted him with that sweet, shy, retiring smile of hers. They talked of nothing important—what each was doing, the weather, topics that just filled up conversation and time—but he reflected that it would be nice to marry her, or a girl like her. He could imagine comfortable nights with her by a fireplace when they would seriously discuss poetry. She would read her poems to him. In time, she would receive recognition. She might become a great American poetess like Elinor Wylie or Edna St. Vincent Millay. He would protect her. And what she most needed in the world was protection. But so would Jack. Jack really liked her. He observed her closely but not obtrusively. He noticed her sallow cheeks and, when she smiled, her bad teeth. Poor Catherine! He began to pity her just as he was beginning to pity nearly everyone these days.

"Then you are not back here studying?"

"No, I just came around for the day," he said.

"Well, it's nice to see you," she said.

"And I'm . . . glad to see you. Have you seen much of Jack of late?"

"No, I haven't. I've been . . . busy."

"He'll be at the poetry recital tonight. You're going, aren't you?"

"Yes, I think so. I like Lindsay. He's so natural."

He wanted to ask her to go with him, but somehow he couldn't get himself to. After all, Jack was interested in her, too. And he couldn't afford to pay for her ticket. Of course, he could borrow the money from Jack, but that would be a dirty trick, asking Jack to loan him money and then using it to take Catherine to the recital when perhaps Jack was planning to take her. They walked along, two strangers. Each of them struggled to find a commonplace of which to speak.

"Are you writing anything new these days, Catherine?" he asked her at length.

"No, I haven't been feeling very well," she said.

"That's too bad. You want to take care of yourself," he said, and again he thought that she needed some decent fellow to protect her.

"A poem of mine was printed in Braithwaite's anthology. Did you see it?" she asked shyly.

He congratulated her and said that he would look it up and read it. And as he spoke, he became envious of her and freshly disappointed in himself. Even Catherine was making some progress. She was gaining some recognition. He was glad of it, and yet he thought of himself again. He was doing nothing, accomplishing nothing.

"Would you like to stop and have a cup of tea at the Coffee Shop, Catherine?" he asked, hoping she would be able to, hoping that then they could really talk.

But she had to decline because of an engagement. He had to smother his disappointment. He was now sure that in the Coffee Shop his tongue would have loosened up. He would have been able to talk to her, and it would have made him feel better. He watched her walk off, and she seemed to him a pathetic figure fading from sight in the misty day.

IV

Roland wandered over to the library, deciding to read for a little while. In the periodical room, he got a copy of *The American Mercury*. He read an autobiographical sketch of a young rebel who returned to his former occupation, disappointed, half-conscious of failure. Roland found the sketch disillusioning. He pondered over the conclusion, in which the writer declared that perhaps the fate of the rebel of this generation was that of endlessly getting and quitting jobs, of roaming about and of then returning to security in a small job. Roland was not a rebel, particularly not an economic one. He had even

cast his first vote for Herbert Hoover. Yet the feeling in the sketch was akin to his own. He told himself that it was futile to do anything. All life was dull and meaningless. Outside now, it was drizzling, and the sky was dark. Futile! He wanted to know what it was all about, this endless working. For what? Why? Here was the University going on year after year, sending out droves of young fellows like himself. And what good was the whole business? Yes, he wanted to know why? But he did not seriously try to answer his question. He merely answered it to himself by muttering silently—"Futile." He felt that he might be better off if he could just get work and enjoy the comforts of life. Routine activity, perhaps, might be best for him. But did he want that? He left the library, incapable of reaching one clear conclusion.

V

Roland walked over to the editorial offices of the campus daily newspaper. Jack, the editor, was there. He was a small, pop-eyed Jewish student who came from a small town near Chicago. Studious by nature, in college he had abandoned his studiousness for a campus career, and, thanks to manipulation and obsequiousness, he had managed to get elected editor of the paper. Roland was, perhaps, his one sincere friendship, and Roland waited while Jack busied himself with work amid the noise of typewriters of freshman reporters. Roland had gone out for the paper but had dropped out after his second year, without having got a job. Jack read a story about a campus dramatic play which razzed several fraternity men of campus political importance. He went through the account with a blue pencil and handed it to the desk editor. He bawled out the desk editor for almost letting such a story go through. Roland didn't approve of Jack doing this. Sometimes, he reflected, Jack's policies were annoying and unnecessary. Roland had frequently defended Jack from others who contemptuously called him "a human door mat"; yet he did have to admit to himself

that Jack was too cautious and careful. But then, Jack was getting somewhere. He was editor, and making contacts, and would get a job next year when he graduated. And getting somewhere now seemed to be the most important of all ends.

"Well, let's go, Roland, old man," Jack said cheerfully.

They left the offices and went over to the Coffee Shop.

"Gee, I'm glad to see you, Roland," Jack said.

"I thought I'd come around today and see you," Roland said.

"Tell me, how's everything going?"

"I haven't landed anything yet."

"You keep on, Roland, old man, you will. You know, I'm for you, Roland. I know you'll get something. You'll come through," Jack said sympathetically.

Jack's trite words and stock encouragement were encouraging to Roland. Jack was a friend.

They found an empty table at the Coffee Shop and ordered tea and toast.

"You'll come through, Roland. I'm pulling for you. I know you'll come through, and I'm pulling for you," Jack said.

"I almost got a job in an advertising agency. It wasn't much, just a filing clerk. But it looked as if it offered promise of a future. Gee, I thought I had it. But I didn't," Roland said.

"The one thing to remember is not to let yourself grow discouraged. Opportunities will come, don't worry—they will. I know you well, Roland, and I know you have the stuff in you. It'll come out. The one thing not to do is let yourself get discouraged."

There was a pause. They ate their toast and sipped tea.

"I don't know, Jack—things often seem so damned futile. I keep thinking about things, and so much that everybody does—it seems so worthless," Roland said.

"You want to buck up, old man," Jack said.

They sat there and overheard a ruddy young fellow telling a buttery-looking co-ed that he had quit smoking to make the track team, and that he was going to try his darnedest to be an athletic success, not only for the school but also because of

Psi U. Because Psi U. was the best darn frat a fellow could join, and he considered himself lucky to have got a bid from it.

"I envy that kid," Roland commented wistfully. "I wish I could lose myself in something foolish just to be doing something. But, I always get to feeling that everything is futile. Gee, I go downtown and see about getting a job, and I see all the people scurrying around and milling about and I ask myself—what for? They run around like a lot of rats and mice in cages, not knowing where they are going and why. They all seem to me to be lost in a blind alley. Gee, honest, Jack, I'd just like to lose myself in work, in any sort of routine work. That's all I ask; merely to lose myself in routine activity," Roland said.

"Roland, you have to buck up and keep your confidence. You've got too much stuff in you and you're too young to feel that way," Jack said.

"I know, but, gee, I'm all mixed up. I know that if I could only get something to do, some sort of routine activity. Gee, I'd try anything or do anything, just so it was something to do."

"Roland, you'll find yourself. And you'll get into the kind of work you want to do. You're not meant to be one of these fellows who go through life saying it's futile. You're too good for that, and, let me tell you, I'm your friend, and I know you'll pull along."

"But, Jack, it all seems so useless. There's my father. Gosh, what does he get out of it? He's worked all his life, and what's he got out of it except a living?"

"Why don't you come back here and get a master's?" Jack asked.

"Well, I would if I could afford it, but, gee, I just couldn't ask my father to send me to school any more," Roland said.

"Have you tried the Employment Bureau on campus?" asked Jack.

"Yes, but there wasn't anything," said Roland.

"Do you know Tom Cameron?"

"Yes, Tom tried and couldn't get me anything," said Roland.

"I think you ought to go back and see him again. You know, Tom is proud of what he accomplishes over there and the jobs he gets fellows. I'd go back and I'd put it up to Tom in such a way that it's a challenge to him and his department to get you a job. That might stir him up," Jack said.

"It's a good idea. I'll try it, but I don't want to create any hard feelings with Tom. It's not his fault that he can't get me a job," said Roland.

"You don't have to create any hard feelings. Just be clever and put it to him as a challenge he has to meet. But say, old man, I have a committee meeting," said Jack.

"What about having supper with me?"

"I'm sorry, old man, but I got a date. I'll see you at the recital, though, if you're going to it," said Jack.

"I am," said Roland.

"Good," said Jack.

He picked up Roland's check.

"No, Jack, don't. I can pay my own," said Roland.

"Oh, it's nothing. And now buck up, old man," Jack said; he patted Roland on the shoulders and left.

VI

Roland sat in the Coffee Shop, glum. Suddenly Pete came up to him and sat down at his table. Pete was the Greek student and the leading campus Bohemian.

"Congratulate me, Roland, I'm graduating," Pete said enthusiastically.

"Then what'll you do?"

"I'll become an American. Sure, I'll become an American," Pete said, grinning.

"What do you mean, Pete?"

The girl waitress came over, and Pete ordered coffee and a sandwich. He looked after her.

"Nice," Pete said.

Roland resented this remark but said nothing.

"Sure, I believe in America. Boy, you believe in America and you'll make money," Pete said.

Roland had never been able to understand Pete. Now he wondered what Pete was talking about. It was some petty racket or other, he guessed. But, also, he told himself that Pete would get his diploma and go out and make more money than he himself would.

"What do you mean, Pete?"

"Sure, I'm going to be an American. Around here there are too many planning to starve for art; the Coffee Shop artists, they're damn fools. They're cracked. Bah! All art is utilitarian. That's why Americans are artists. Be an American and make money. You watch me, boy!"

"I don't agree with you that all art's utilitarian. I think it's sociological," Roland said.

"Sure, it's utilitarian," Pete said.

"What do you mean?"

"Look at the Chicago school of architects. They knew it. They made art functional, and they made money, too," said Pete.

"I think that architecture should embody symbolically the meanings and the values of a civilization. Did you ever read Ruskin?"

"Sure. All art is utilitarian, that's what I'm saying. Look at Szukalski. All his ideas are wonderful esthetically. They're beautiful. But who wants to live in one of the crazy houses he designs? Why, not even a lunatic. Sure, boy, all art is utilitarian. That's American, too," Pete said.

Roland became uneasy because Pete seemed so fidgety and nervous. Pete glanced off at the waitress after she had served him.

"Nice girl," Pete said.

Roland did not answer.

"Whenever you talk philosophy or art with a woman you end up in bed," Pete said.

Talk about sex generally dismayed Roland.

"That's good tactics, but I got better ones. I just tell a girl

I want to make her, and if she refuses to go to bed with me, I tell her it's her loss. She's missing something good. I tell her she can't get the Greek technique from everybody," Pete said.

Roland still didn't answer him.

"Yes, boy, you want to be honest with women. Tell them the truth. It's no insult to a girl to tell her you want to make her. It's a compliment. And if she doesn't like it, well, all right, be indifferent," Pete said.

Still not liking what Pete was saying, Roland found himself becoming interested and wanting a girl.

"You know, two years ago," Roland said haltingly and with embarrassment, "when I worked in the summer, the stenographer was something. She was a regular steno type, but she liked me, I thought. She used to sit in the office with her legs crossed and she never wore anything underneath. I took her out a couple of times, and, gee, she knew dirty jokes, all kinds of them."

"Did you lay her?"

"No," said Roland.

"You're a damned fool."

"May I sit down?"

They both looked up. It was Frances, a baby-faced sophomore. She was not very pretty, but her youthful and obvious virginity endowed her with a kind of young and girlish freshness.

"Hello, Peter. Hello, Roland," she said timidly, as she sat next to Pete.

"Roland, she's a virgin," Pete said.

Frances blushed. Roland was disgusted. Such nice girls ought to be protected from fellows like Pete, he thought. Pete was probably setting out to ruin the girl. He had just been thinking of going, but now he decided he'd stay. Maybe he could protect her from Pete.

"Peter, is it nice to tease me that way?" she asked.

"You're nice. I like virgins best of all. You can always sit with me," Pete said, and then he laughed.

Both Frances and Roland blushed.

"I'm going to leave this table this very minute," she said, not making any effort to move.

"Gee, is it necessary to talk sex all the time?" Roland asked rather haltingly.

"Of course not," Frances said.

"You stay here, girl. You'll be safe. Your big brother there will protect you from me," Pete said.

Roland didn't answer. Frances blushed more noticeably.

"Frances, why are you a virgin?"

"Peter, that's silly, a silly question," she said.

"Listen, don't be a foolish virgin. I have a proposition," Pete said.

"What?"

"I'll seduce you for twenty-five dollars. You'll have a good time and you won't be a foolish virgin any more. You're old enough to grow up," Pete said.

"I never had anyone say things to me like that," she said in mock protest, while Roland listened in mounting disgust.

"I'm going to be an American and to make money. Twenty-five dollars, Frances, and I'll make a woman out of you," Pete said.

She made a face in mock horror.

"Peter, do you know anything about Freud?"

He laughed.

"Well, do you?"

"Look out, girl," Pete said.

"I have to write a term paper and I thought I'd write a term paper about Freud. Lots of people talk about him, and I thought maybe if I wrote my term paper on Freud, I'd learn something about him," she said.

"Twenty-five dollars and you won't have to learn about Freud by reading," Pete said.

"I'm serious," she said.

"Why don't you write a term paper about something else?" Roland asked her.

"I thought I'd like to know about Freud because everybody talks about him a lot," she said.

"Freud is pretty deep," Roland said.

"Frances, did you ever dream of eating ice cream cones?" Pete asked.

"I might have. Why, Peter?"

"That's bad. And do you like mushrooms?"

"Yes, I do," she answered, while Roland winced.

"That's very bad, my girl," Pete said.

"I don't understand you, but you must be talking about something awful." She turned to Roland. "What does he mean?"

"Listen, I'll write you a term paper on Freud and seduce you for twenty-five dollars. Now, that's a bargain for you, girl. Accept it quick before I change my mind or raise my price," Pete said.

"Peter, you're dreadful," she said.

Pete laughed. Roland felt that he would retch if he didn't leave. Pete must be a bastard, and he disliked him. He got up and walked out, Pete looking after him. As he left the Coffee Shop, he heard Frances laughing gaily at something Pete had said.

He thought it was absolutely lousy for a guy like Pete to set out to ruin the life of a nice innocent girl like Frances.

VII

Roland sat for a while in the lounge of the men's club, listening to and enjoying sentimental songs that came over the radio. But, growing restless, he went outside and started walking about aimlessly. It was drizzling and soon would be completely dark. He saw a familiar figure approaching through the deepening dusk. It was Arnold, who had been Roland's instructor in English 202.

"Why, hello, Roland, how are you? Are you back with us on campus?" Arnold asked cordially after Roland had greeted him.

"No, I'm just around for a day," Roland said.

"What are you doing now?"

"Nothing. Gee, I wish I could find a job," Roland said.

"No luck?"

"No," Roland said, walking beside him toward the eastern edge of the campus.

"I guess things are pretty tough and it's difficult to land anything," Arnold said.

"Well, I've been looking for a job for months. The law of averages ought to be working with me by now," Roland said.

Arnold half smiled.

"Have you tried the University Employment Bureau?" he asked.

"Yes. There was nothing doing."

"I'm afraid they're not as successful as they advertise themselves to be," Arnold said.

"Well, they get lots of calls," Roland said.

"I'm sorry to hear of your tough luck. I do hope you get something," Arnold said.

"What are you doing now, Arnold?"

"The same old grind," Arnold said dispiritedly.

"Are you writing anything?"

"No. I don't have the time. I'm too busy reading and correcting those damn freshman papers," Arnold said.

"I guess it isn't any fun, is it?" Roland said.

"God, no! Half my students can't even write a straight English sentence, and many of those who can, haven't anything to say that's worth reading. I don't know what the hell they're getting educated for. It's miserable work. But what the hell are you going to do? Everybody has to eat," Arnold said.

"Yeah, Arnold, I think I know how you feel. Gosh, I'm ready to do any sort of work. I feel that I'd be happier if I could just sink myself in activity, any kind of activity, so long as it's doing something and getting paid for it," Roland said.

Arnold said nothing. They came to the campus edge and paused there.

"Lately I've been feeling that way more and more. I get to feeling that I would just be happier if I could get to doing something, anything, as long as it's doing something. When I'm just loafing, as I've been doing today, I get to feeling that life is more futile than it really is. That's why I want to get something to do, because it'll help me get rid of this feeling of futility," Roland said.

"Well, I don't know! There's lots of things I'd like to try and write, if I could only find the time. But then, maybe someday things'll turn out all right," Arnold said.

They stood there, and their eyes met, a glance that was expressive of real friendship, of a desire to say more than had been said.

"Listen, you must call me up and come over for tea one of these days and we'll get a better chance to talk. And I'd like you to meet Helen. She's the girl I want to marry soon, as soon as I can afford it," Arnold said.

"I'll be glad to," Roland said.

They shook hands and parted, Arnold going on east, and Roland turning back on the campus. Roland reflected that at least Arnold had a job. That was something.

VIII

After eating a lonely meal in the Commons Roland spent about an hour monotonously alone, brooding and questioning himself. He wished he could see someone to whom he could explain things, to explain how he felt, to explain himself. Maybe if he had a nice girl, intelligent and understanding, and could marry her, he'd be better off. Arnold was getting married, and he was sure it was to a fine girl. But how could he expect to get married? He wished it were time for the recital. He would be less lonesome and troubled with people around, friends to see,

and hearing poetry would be relaxing. It would take him out of this world. He took a short walk in the drizzle, still brooding, and when he returned, people were in the lighted corridor, waiting for the doors to open. He felt more cheerful because he saw a number of people around him. He again objectified his feelings in the people around him. Many of them must feel as he did, unhappy for one cause or another, and they had probably come to the recital for the same reason he had. He glanced about frequently, hoping to see some friends.

They were now coming in crowds, and the mere act of watching enabled Roland to divert his attention from himself. He saw young girls, and he looked at their silk-stockinged legs. He saw professors who were graying, the wives of professors, some with double chins, and all types of students. Suddenly he remembered how once after a poetry recital here he'd gone out with a bunch on a vice crusade. Thinking of this, he wished, despite his feeling that it was all filthy, that such a crusade could be organized for tonight. They had gone to one of the whore houses out in Burnham; to a place that looked like a saloon, going through a passageway from it to a cabaret in the back, and there they'd seen all kinds of girls who wore only slips, and a desultory collection of men, some of whom looked like gangsters, others who seemed to be businessmen out for a night, and many young fellows who liked this sort of thing. Girls had immediately flocked around them, sat on their laps, petted them, called them dearie and used similar terms of affection. It was filthy, but the girls had excited them, and they'd gone upstairs. It had been his first and only time, and it had disgusted him. And they'd seen a show on a small stage at one end of the cabaret. A man and one of the whores. He'd never been so disgusted with himself. Filthy! And yet, they'd all enjoyed the show. Only afterward none of them had ever mentioned this experience. What was wrong with him that he should be wanting to do this again? What kind of person was he? He was just wanting to wade through filth, he told himself in guilt. Some of the fellows who had gone with him were

here tonight, here with decent girls, and, as they passed they said hello. Jack had come with Catherine and talked idly with Roland for a few minutes. And there was Joe, now a senior, with Jenny Condit, a very nice girl. He hung around the corridor for a while and then went inside.

IX

Professor Saxon from the English Department introduced the poet, offering several stale jokes and a few conventional remarks about those who sang of the new Midwestern beauty. Then the poet rose and faced the large and admiring audience. He was a short, stocky, light-haired man, barrel-like in figure, and outfitted in an ill-fitting tuxedo. The poet had come with a national reputation for his recitations, and the audience expected something. It was not disappointed. They heard poetry recited in a booming manner, intermingled with sudden changes into such a low voice that the words were scarcely audible. At times the poet sounded like a cross between a Fourth of July orator and a train announcer, and at other times, he seemed like a studied actor striving to throw away lines with an extremely quiet voice. The poetry was provincial and at times almost self-consciously naïve. Its principal charm was to be found in its amazing power of sustained cavalades of massed rhythms. Halfway through the recital he presented one particular poem which caught Roland's attention. It was preceded by a brief remark to the effect that the modern college students were perpetuating the old-time cavalier tradition. Then he thundered into his poem.

*Babbitt, your tribe is passing away,
This is the end of your infamous day.
The Virginians are coming again.*

Roland realized that the Virginians meant himself, Pete, Jack, Foster, Catherine, a number of others he knew, and

many more like them sitting here and listening, all riding hard metaphorically and shouting:

*With your neat little safety-vault boxes,
With your faces like geese and foxes,
You
Short-legged, short-armed, short-minded men,
Your short-sighted days are over . . .*

And thus onward to a noisy minor crescendo.

*Babbitt, your story is passing away.
The Virginians are coming again.*

Then the poet went on, lowering his voice almost to a whisper, in order to rise once more with the rhythms riding hard and fast.

*All set for the victory, calling the raid
I see them, the next generation,
Gentlemen, hard-riding, long-legged men . . .*

Roland asked himself, did these thrilling descriptions in the poem fit the audience? Did the poem express their hopes and their feelings?

*So, Babbitt, your racket is passing away.
Your sons will be changelings, and burn down your
world.
Fire-eaters, troubadours, conquistadors,
Your sons will be born, refusing your load,
Thin-skinned scholars, hard-riding men,
Poets unharnessed, the moon their abode,
With the statesmen's code, the gentlemen's code . . .*

And more thundering rhythms crashed through the hall. Roland was wondering while he listened. What relationship did these grand and cannonading words have to his life and to the lives of his generation here on campus? What did it mean in dissipating the sense of futility which he found so constantly recurring in his own thoughts these days? What did

this all mean to him now when he had to go out and earn his bread and butter? He liked the poem, and still he couldn't see that it really touched him now in his present circumstances. He wondered to what extent others felt the same way?

After the recital, he watched the crowd leave. Friends of his, Jack among them, asked him to come with them and have something to eat. He wanted to, but refused. They were all with girls and had their own problems and interests. He felt out of it. He had a cup of coffee alone in a sandwich shop and walked to the station by himself to get his I.C. train south. It was still drizzling. He thought that tomorrow morning he would have to go out again and look for a job. Eventually he would get one. He would have to. He would fit himself into the mold a job demanded. He would work along, and his college days would sink backward as a memory, nostalgic and romantic. He would remember dull days like this one, too, and, looking back on it, he would see in it romance that he failed to see now. Getting on the train, he recalled the conclusion to the poem, and muttered it to himself:

*In the star-proud, natural fury of men
The Virginians are coming again.**

He huddled in a seat and looked out the window at the passing and vaguely distinguishable buildings in the darkness and rain. Would he get a job tomorrow?

* From *Selected Poems of Vachel Lindsay*. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

The Mowbray Family

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

BY

JAMES T. FARRELL

AND

HORTENSE FARRELL

(This play was written in 1940.)

CHARACTERS

(In the order of their appearance)

ERIC LEWIS	JOHN MORTIMER
BARBARA MOWBRAY	VINCENT, <i>the butler</i>
ALEC MOWBRAY	MIRIAM STRASSER
IDA MOWBRAY	SANFORD WARREN
PAULINE MOWBRAY	MRS. FRANCES BIEMILLER
LOUISE, <i>the maid</i>	MRS. ELINOR FAIRCHILD
PHILLIP BENTLEY	MR. CHARLES BIEMILLER.
	MR. JOHNSON



SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

THE SCENE: *The library-living room of the Mowbray home, New York City. Somewhere in the East 70's.*

THE TIME: 1939—*Late spring.*

ACT ONE, Scene 1

The library-living room in the Mowbray home, somewhere in the East 70's, New York City.

It is a large room in a typical older family residence. The walls are lined with books. The furnishings have a very elegant quality and are in the best of taste. There is nothing ostentatious about the room. It gives the feeling of being much lived in. There are many antique pieces about the room. The Left wall faces the street. In a corner there is a telephone on a table. Upper Right is an entrance leading into the hall. To the Right (on the Right wall) is a door leading into a music room. A radio is placed downstage Right by the wall. While there are

many rooms in the house, this one has always been most favored by the family. It is on the second floor front, so that anyone going upstairs from the front entrance must pass the upstage doorway. There are some fine pictures on the wall, among them one or two rather startling modern paintings. The general color of the room is warm and gay. MRS. MOWBRAY has no doubt consulted one of the better interior decorators, though she insists that she alone is responsible for the furnishings.

Magazines are generously displayed on tables. There are flowers thoughtfully placed and arranged in different parts of the room. While it is altogether quite beautifully furnished, it is in no way unique. It possesses nothing that a sufficiently well-off person could not acquire. The eye rests easily and should not be distracted by any one detail.

As the curtain rises, two people are standing in the room: a young man and a young woman. The young man is ERIC LEWIS; he is the husband of the young woman, BARBARA. She is the eldest daughter of ALEC and IDA MOWBRAY. They have evidently just entered, and by their expressions they convey that something is disturbing them. ERIC has gone to the window and is looking out.

ERIC is a young man, about thirty-five years old, but looks younger and very boyish. He is congenitally morose and inclined to self-pity. He is well dressed and favors tweeds.

BARBARA is twenty-five and rather attractive in an undistinguished way. Her clothes are fashionable rather than truly smart. She is slightly affected and inclined toward histrionics. She speaks in a cultivated English with a slight hint of a British accent.

BARBARA is standing in the middle of the room watching ERIC. He turns around, annoyed at her solicitude.

ERIC (*with sarcasm*): I feel perfectly well. I had an excellent dinner. Everything was just perfect.

BARBARA: Eric, please . . .

ERIC (*turning and seeing her pained expression*): Don't look at me like that.

BARBARA: You have a genius for making everything as difficult as possible. You'd like me to sit home and do nothing. You don't want me to get any satisfaction out of life.

ERIC: I don't see any difference between doing nothing and what you're doing.

BARBARA: Don't you think that's an arrogant attitude to take about something that matters to *me*? That matters to me greatly?

ERIC: That's your misfortune. What proof have you that you're an actress? What makes you think you can act? The two or three bit parts you've had which were not really more than "walk-ons?"

BARBARA: That's cruel of you, Eric. I had to have a beginning somewhere. I had to gain *some* experience. Every time I've succeeded in getting what you so unkindly refer to as a *bit* part, you've been impossible—utterly intolerant—un-understanding—downright nasty. You've even begrudged the few dollars I made . . . as if that mattered.

ERIC: I haven't tried to stop you. I haven't said one word that could be interpreted as "objecting."

BARBARA: You haven't said anything. My God—you said enough in the way you've behaved. Your *moods* have told me more than any words. Your sullenness—your melancholy fits—that's exactly what they are—*fits*—everyone was pleased 'at dinner when I told them the news—everyone but you. All *you* had to say when I announced that at last I had a real part—was: "thanks to John Mortimer." Supposing he was instrumental? What of it? Is there anything wrong in that? And why shouldn't I have taken advantage of his influence? It might have been someone else. It happened to be Mortimer.

ERIC: I could stand a great deal more if you weren't so concerned with my *moods*. Who wouldn't have moods in this house—and in times like these?

BARBARA: Why should I let the world crisis interfere with my career? (*Becoming incensed.*) Besides, you're not doing anything to change the world! If a man doesn't try to *do* something—he has no right to complain as much as you do.

ERIC (*very solemnly*): I am writing.

BARBARA: No one reads what you write anyway.

ERIC: That's because there's so many people like you in the world.

BARBARA: This constant bickering is driving me mad. If it isn't one thing—then it's another. First it was this house—

ERIC: I still don't like it.

BARBARA: Well, I do. If you think I'm going to be the wife of a starving novelist and live in some Village dump—

ERIC (*with sarcasm*): How much are they paying you for the part?

BARBARA: Oh, don't be mercenary. I'm not doing it for the money. (*Looking at him helplessly.*) I don't *want* the money, Eric . . . you know that . . .

ERIC (*walking down into the room from the window and speaking more to himself*): Well, no matter what they're paying you, it'll be more than I've made in a long time.

BARBARA (*going to him*): Oh, Eric, I'm sorry. Please forgive me. (*She throws her arms around him.*) Eric, I don't always mean to say the things I say—but somehow I always say things I don't mean. (*She kisses him lightly.*) Darling.

ERIC (*unable to resist kissing her*): Forget it. (BARBARA straightens his tie and smooths his hair as ALEC MOWBRAY, followed by his wife, IDA, and another daughter, PAULINE, stray in, followed by LOUISE, the maid, who is carrying a tray with cups and saucers.)

ALEC (*very genially*): I hope we're not interrupting. (ALEC MOWBRAY is a man of fifty, slightly plump. He is rather vain about his looks, but more for his own pleasure than for any outward effect. He is a corporation lawyer and usually forgets about business when he enters the house. He likes his home and likes to indulge in a droll wit.)

PAULINE (*flouncing into a chair and speaking playfully*): I suppose all families are the same. People in a family just can't help boring one another. When they're not fighting they're bored—and when they *are* fighting, they're still bored. (PAULINE is the younger daughter. She is twenty-two. She is

a fine-looking girl with more individuality than her sister, BARBARA. She is a graduate student and is rather indifferent to what she wears.)

ALEC (*going to a chair and settling*): What's this you're saying, Pauline?

PAULINE: Papa, you always say "am I interrupting" even when you know you are.

ALEC: How do you know what I know? Your Mother seems to have a good idea of what I don't know . . .

IDA (*who has been arranging magazines on a table*): Alec, dear, I certainly do—and I can't understand why you take such pride in it. (*She laughs.* IDA MOWBRAY, *his wife, is about forty-five, but very well preserved; she looks younger than her years. She is a handsome woman and is very chic, very precise in her speech, and takes herself very seriously. The maid has been going around with the tray and serving everyone with coffee. She leaves unobtrusively.*)

ALEC: Ah, but I have you to teach me! (*Looking at all his children.*) Your mother is educating me—or should I say re-educating me?

IDA (*taking cup to her chair*): I'm doing nothing of the sort. I've given you up. If you want to know—I've just about reached the conclusion that you're ineducable.

ALEC: I wish you wouldn't humiliate me in front of my son-in-law. (*He looks over at ERIC, who is absorbed in a magazine.*) He's disillusioned enough. Aren't you, Eric?

ERIC (*looking up and feigning not to have heard*): What's that?

ALEC: I say you're disillusioned enough, aren't you, Eric?

ERIC: I don't object to that word if you want to use it.

BARBARA: Papa, you're not as funny as you think you are.

PAULINE: You're certainly not as funny as you used to be.

ALEC: Well, I'm getting older. And you are all getting smarter. And your Mother here—well, your Mother is getting so important that I'm just sort of trailing along.

IDA: I wish you were *trailing*, Alec.

PAULINE: Mother means—instead of being dragged—don't you, dear?

IDA: I mean nothing of the sort.

ALEC: Well, anyway, it's nice we're all here for a change. Pauline, you haven't been home for dinner in over a week—and, Ida, you haven't had dinner at home for four days.

PAULINE: You know I never bring any of my boy friends home any more until I'm quite certain you'll like them. You were extremely rude to Eliot when I brought him to dinner. You know you were.

ALEC: Eliot was a dummy. Besides, he behaved as if I were going to eat him up. Why, I was *kind* to the lad. I left him alone.

ERIC: Eliot *was* a dope, Pauline.

PAULINE: Well, Phillip Bentley isn't like anyone else I've ever brought home. You'll see.

ALEC: What did you say his department of culture was?

IDA: Why, Pauline said he was a philosopher.

PAULINE: I said he teaches philosophy.

BARBARA: Does he look like a philosopher?

ERIC: Now, what does a philosopher look like?

PAULINE: Does Eric look like a novelist? Don't be ridiculous. He looks like a human being. Only he has a very rare quality.

ALEC (*with unmistakable irony*): I don't care how he looks. What I want to know is—what's his political orientation? (*He leans forward and speaks to PAULINE, lowering his voice.*) Is he confused?

IDA (*indignantly*): Well, Alec, with Fascist bombs being dropped all over the place—and some of us trying to do something about it—trying to help—doing all we can humanly possibly do—and you sit there, grinning over your stupid jokes.

ALEC: Ida, darling, if I were honestly convinced that eating Committee dinners with your friends would halt the march of Fascism—I'd swallow 'em—speeches and all. (*He pauses for a brief moment.*) Mortimer back?

IDA: I haven't heard—so I assume he is still away.

BARBARA: Mother, maybe I should write Mortimer and tell him I got the part.

IDA: Don't be stupid, darling. He probably knows it already. (*A pause.*) You know, I do hope he comes back soon. I'm so worried about the cabinet crisis in France, and I can't wait to find out what he thinks about it.

BARBARA: Mother, it's a much better part than I imagined it would be. (*She gets up from her chair.*) I have the last curtain, and it couldn't be more beautiful. It's powerful—but awfully poetic in a symbolic way. It's got a wonderful message, too, which I give. After everybody is ruined and dies or gets arrested or goes to the hospital in that simply terrible scene, I get up and tell about how after all that tragedy there can be paradise.

IDA: Mortimer said that it is a play that has direction.

ERIC: I'm fed up with playwrights who think they can save the world with a speech at the end of the third act.

IDA: Eric, you have an ivory-tower attitude. (*ERIC contemptuously picks up another magazine and begins to thumb through it.*)

ALEC (*starting to light his cigar after a pause*): How's the book coming, Eric?

BARBARA: Papa, you are always asking Eric how his book is coming along just as though he were an upholsterer. You ought to know by now how he works. He works slowly, like a beaver. (*To ERIC.*) Don't you, dear?

ALEC (*apologetically*): I didn't mean anything, Barbara. I expect great things from Eric. (*ERIC relapses into a brooding shell.*)

PAULINE: Eric, I've only read bits and pieces of your book and I'm completely at a loss—why don't you be an angel and give us an inkling of what it's all about.

ERIC (*very seriously*): It's a book which begins with the word "birth" and ends with the word "death."

PAULINE: Oh—! (*She wanders over to the window.*)

BARBARA: And I wish you wouldn't disconcert Eric. He has

a concept of beauty which practically no one can assimilate. (ERIC *winces*.)

ALEC: Now, Eric, don't wince like that. Why shouldn't your wife come to your defense?

IDA: I forgot to mention that Mortimer's read your book—the one that's published, I mean. And he says that if you'll stop being disillusioned and start pointing out the way, you'll amount to something.

ERIC: I can remember your friend Mortimer when he was writing poems begging his lost generation to commit suicide. (*He rises and speaks as he walks out of the room.*) It's unfortunate that Mortimer didn't follow his own advice. (ERIC *exits*. A *pause*.)

BARBARA (*angrily*): Mother, why did you have to say what Mortimer thought? Was that really necessary? You know Eric is an artist and he can't take criticism. Criticism rapes art.

IDA: Why, Mortimer wouldn't think of raping Eric's book. Eric should be grateful for Mortimer's suggestions. Mortimer is a very astute critic.

ALEC (*sardonically*): Well, Barbara, Eric's trouble is that he doesn't realize that Mortimer has become our arbiter.

PAULINE: He may be Mother's but he's not mine.

IDA: Why can't we all be quiet unless we have something significant to say to one another.

ALEC: Ida, dear, you take so many spiritual and political somersaults that it's practically impossible to know what you consider significant.

IDA: I know. You want me to remain static. (*She looks at ALEC with some irritation before speaking.*) You've never taken any of my activities seriously.

ALEC (*leaning back and closing his eyes as though he were thinking*): Now, let me see—just how many *phases* I've gone through with you. The first one I can recall was Rudolph Steiner—then came Freud—we were all Freudianated there for a while—and then I think it was Gurdjieff. . . .

BARBARA: Papa, please . . .

IDA: Let him go on and enjoy himself . . .

ALEC (*laughing good-humoredly*): After Gurdjieff we had a splurge of surrealistic art—and then came Technocracy—

IDA: Go on. Have your fun at my expense.

ALEC: My dear Ida, your progress has been undeviating. Only I'm naturally skeptical about this *new* phase.

IDA: I suppose we have all suffered because of my *phases*. That's a very unkind word, Alec. I suppose you would call *Sascha*, a phase.

ALEC: No. Sascha is a cause. And, I'm sure, a deserving one.

IDA (*sounding suddenly worried*): I don't know what to do about Sascha, Alec. And I've got to decide. I've a letter from him I forgot to show you.

ALEC: What do you mean—what to do?

IDA: Well, Alec—we have just so much money. We can't do everything.

ALEC (*rubbing it in*): You spent one whole evening two years ago convincing me that Sascha was a great musician. Now, I don't profess to know anything about music. I've no ear, as you know. But I believed you and, as you yourself said—Sascha's consecration to his art. (*He closes his eyes.*) *Then* you said that what the world needed was more symphonies. *Now* you say it needs more picket lines—and boycotts.

IDA (*very dramatically*): Alec, dear, the world has changed. Don't you realize that we stand *at a fork* in the road of history? There will be no place for Sascha in a world that promises to have no need for music *or* for Sascha.

ALEC: Do you want to drop him? Can he find someone else?

IDA (*protesting*): Of course I *don't want* to drop him. But we simply can't give what we were giving to Sascha and at the same time for the fight against Fascism.

ALEC: Well, you've already stopped giving money to that Writer's Colony in New Jersey.

IDA: Alec—we're not one of America's Sixty Families.

ALEC (*resignedly*): All right, my dear. You decide. I like Sascha . . . and I'm sorry to let him down.

IDA (*slightly tearful*): It breaks my heart, Alec. Really it

does . . . I feel wretched . . . but what do you want me to do?

ALEC: Anything you wish. (*He pauses and looks over at her annoyed expression.*) The international crisis can't go on forever.

IDA (*passionately*): Your whole outlook, all your attitudes are unhealthy. I couldn't *live* if I didn't feel there was something I could do. It isn't enough for us to sit around talking, talking, talking, and doing nothing. If the world waited on *your* kind—it would be too late to do anything any more. Alec Mowbray, it's really later than you think.

ALEC: Now, be frank. You merely want me to agree with you that your present activities are fruitful.

IDA: You wouldn't say that if you didn't think Mortimer was a Communist.

ALEC: Mortimer may have something to do with what I feel . . .

IDA (*almost in a lecturing tone*): Whether he is or not is quite beside the point. My Committee is not Communistic. It is for Democracy, Peace, and Progress, and we're not concerned with anyone's politics.

PAULINE: Just what is Mortimer, Mother?

IDA: Mortimer is someone who is doing something besides talking. (*The telephone rings and PAULINE answers it.*)

PAULINE: Hello? Yes—who's calling?—Just a minute, please. (*She turns to her mother.*) It's Mr. Mortimer. (*PAULINE puts down receiver and returns to where she was sitting.*)

BARBARA: Tell him I got the part.

IDA (*crossing to telephone excitedly*): Hello, Mortimer. You *did!* . . . I was wondering when you'd be back—in fact, we were just talking about you—(*She laughs.*) No—just the family . . . nothing of the sort . . . you *are* . . . yes—do come up . . . we're just a bourgeois family gathering—(*She laughs.*) Yes—(*solemnly*) Do tell me . . . Yes. . . . Yes. . . . Yes . . . yes . . . soon . . . yes . . . good-by, Mortimer. (*She stands for a moment by the telephone and then*

turns to them all triumphantly.) Mortimer says everything's all right in France.

ALEC (*dryly*): That's fine. I'm glad to hear it. But you should have said just a capitalist family gathering, Ida. (IDA proceeds back to where she was sitting.)

IDA: Alec, don't be so trivial. Well, he says he's not far away and would like to come up for a moment.

BARBARA: I told you to tell him I got the part.

ALEC: I assume this is just Mortimer and not a Committee.

IDA: You know, you've never really talked to Mortimer. You don't know what he thinks. I think you'd have quite another opinion of him if you approached him differently—with more humility. You know, Alec, you're very opinionated. You believe everything you read in the newspapers.

PAULINE: Have you ever heard him talk about Russia?

IDA: He knows very well I'm not interested in Communism—beyond—well, naturally—an objective interest. Everyone talks about Russia.

PAULINE: Well, what does Mortimer say about it?

IDA (*looking at them all, is suddenly reluctant*): How can I tell you in a word what he has to say on such a vast subject as Russia?

ALEC: Ida, darling, you can use as many words as you wish—

PAULINE: I didn't ask you for a treatise, Mother.

IDA: Among other things, Mortimer says that there is more said and written on the subject of Russia by persons who have never set foot there. Well, he *has* been there. He has *seen* Russia.

ALEC: There've been quite a number of books, Ida, written by people who *have* been there—although God knows how they got out.

IDA: According to Mortimer, they have been deliberate distortions—and written by White Guards—or reactionary visitors who have only gone there in order to return and write a book about what they have *allegedly* seen. Listen, Alec, in your own field—you, as a lawyer—know how even the law can

be distorted to win a case. How many times have we heard you bemoan what takes place in your own profession.

ALEC: I only do that when I lose a case.

PAULINE: Mother, you're reeling that off just as though you'd learned a lesson.

IDA: But Russia isn't the issue with us. Our problem is to fight Fascism, defend Democracy, and work for Progress.

ALEC: Ida, dear, our problem is to mind our own business. You know, I sometimes wish that the whole damned continent of Europe were in the earthquake zone. (*A bell is heard ringing.*)

PAULINE (*jumping up*): That must be Phillip.

ALEC (*with a mock conspiratorial tone*): Are you going to try to win him over, Ida? (*IDA frowns at ALEC. PAULINE has run to the door of the room.*)

PAULINE (*calling out*): Phillip?

PHILLIP'S VOICE: Yes.

PAULINE: Come on up. (*The family waits. There is a pause in the conversation while he is coming up the stairs. PHILLIP BENTLEY enters, and PAULINE takes his arm and brings him into the room. PHILLIP BENTLEY is in his early thirties. He looks like a very serious young man, but underneath he is inclined to be light and playful. He does not wear his profession heavily. Because he is an instructor, he dresses conservatively. His ties, however, never quite go with his shirts and suits.*) This is my mother.

PHILLIP (*going toward IDA and shaking her hand*): How do you do.

IDA (*very cordially*): How do you do, Mr. Bentley.

PAULINE: And this is my father.

PHILLIP (*going toward ALEC as he proffers his hand*): How do you do.

ALEC: How do you do, sir.

PAULINE: And this is my sister, Barbara Lewis.

PHILLIP: How do you do.

PAULINE: Sit down, Phillip.

BARBARA: Yes, do. (*PHILLIP takes a chair. There is an awk-*

ward pause in the conversation, as if no one knows what to say. PHILLIP takes in the room.)

PAULINE: Well, the family has been informed of your existence.

PHILLIP: I hope you gave them my full pedigree.

IDA: What's in a pedigree? (*She laughs in a silly fashion.*) Pauline tells us you are a philosopher!

PHILLIP: Well, not exactly. (*He laughs softly.*) I'm only an instructor in philosophy—but I wouldn't say I was a philosopher.

IDA: Perhaps you're just modest, Mr. Bentley. You've arrived at a very opportune moment. Now maybe I can get a philosopher to take my side in a family discussion. I was trying to explain to my husband that in the times in which we live we all have to do what we can in what counts. (*She looks over at ALEC disdainfully and turns back to PHILLIP.*) How is man to escape withering away—or being sunk into a frightful morass?

PHILLIP (*ironically*): Well, Mrs. Mowbray, I'm afraid the human race will devise means to protect itself from such a catastrophe.

IDA (*continuing dramatically*): I consider life important—but what is life without the *breath* of life? How can we maintain it without making ourselves a part of the current? And how can we maintain the current unchecked? (*She looks at PHILLIP as though waiting for a definite answer.*)

PHILLIP: That's a slightly involved question, Mrs. Mowbray. (*With a twinkle in his eye.*) I think we should fearlessly face experience.

IDA: That's just what I mean. (*She pauses for a moment.*) I'm glad to see that your mind is more open than my husband's.

PAULINE: Mother, don't go patronizing Father.

IDA: Oh, I'm used to your father's antiquated attitudes. . . . (*She looks at PHILLIP for a moment before speaking.*) I'm sure you're with us in our fight against Fascism?

PHILLIP: Of course. (*His voice becomes flat.*) My brother died fighting in Spain.

IDA: (*softly and dramatically*): How dreadful, Mr. Bentley! I'm so sorry to hear that. It's heartbreaking to think of all that suffering in Spain, and all those who fought and lost their lives. But I cannot believe that they died in vain.

PHILLIP (*restraining a certain bitterness*): I regret, Mrs. Mowbray, that I cannot share your optimism.

IDA: Mr. Bentley, I understand your grief, and how you must feel, but—

PAULINE (*interrupting*): Mother, please! (*A pause. Trying to change the subject.*) Father, isn't it wonderful? Phillip is going to help me with my doctor's thesis.

IDA: Pauline, I was just thinking that it would be nice if Mr. Bentley met Mortimer. (*She turns to PHILLIP.*) Mr. Mortimer is quite encyclopedic.

ALEC: Yes, he certainly appears to be all of that. (*IDA gives ALEC a disapproving look. She then looks appealingly at PHILLIP.*)

IDA: Do you know—I'm afraid I've been more than negligent on the side of philosophy. I should *do* something about it . . .

PHILLIP: Don't worry, Mrs. Mowbray. You've managed to get along very well without it. (*IDA doesn't reply—but looks merely pathetic.*)

ALEC (*holding out a cigar*): Will you have a cigar?

PHILLIP: No, thank you—I'll smoke a cigarette.

IDA: That box beside you is filled with cigarettes. (*PHILLIP fumbles in his pockets, gets out a cigarette, and lights it. ALEC lights his cigar.*)

PAULINE: Phillip, we really must go. (*Doorbell is heard ringing.*)

IDA: That's probably Mr. Mortimer. You must wait a second, Mr. Bentley. This is the man I was telling you about.

PAULINE: Mother, we can't dally. We have to be going.

ALEC: You must come back and see us sometime, Mr. Bentley.

PHILLIP (*as MORTIMER enters*): I shall, thank you. (*MORTIMER makes a bee line for IDA. He is a man of forty-two who*

looks his age. He is immaculately dressed, but not stylishly. He looks almost of another generation. His voice is overcultivated in quality, and he usually speaks very softly with perfect enunciation. Something of a ministerial tone frequently pervades his conversation. And he seems to use it very consciously. Also, a note of piety often creeps into his speech. His manner is very formal, and he is a person who seldom relaxes. When he does relax and talk in a personal vein, he seeks to give the impression that he is a person who should gain sympathy.)

MORTIMER: Hello! How are you, Ida? (*He takes them all in.*) I trust I haven't intruded by telephoning you and coming up to see you this evening. I just got back to New York.

IDA (*spiritedly*): Why, not at all. I'm so glad to see you. And, Mortimer, I want you to meet a friend of Pauline's. Mr. Bentley, this is Mr. Mortimer.

PHILLIP (*very formally*): How do you do.

MORTIMER (*with controlled antagonism*): Mr. Bentley?

IDA: Mortimer, Mr. Bentley is an instructor in philosophy at Columbia.

MORTIMER (*speaking very formally and coldly*): How do you do. (*MORTIMER turns away from PHILLIP.*)

PAULINE: We have to hurry, Phillip.

MORTIMER: How do you do, Mr. Mowbray.

ALEC: Hello. (*PHILLIP has come over to shake hands with MR. MOWBRAY.*) Come back and see us. (*MORTIMER covertly looks sharp-eyed at PHILLIP.*)

BARBARA (*breathlessly and with excitement*): Mr. Mortimer—Mother forgot to tell you—I got the part! Oh, it's wonderful—and I don't know how to thank you—it's even better than I thought.

MORTIMER: What did I tell you? Didn't I promise I would arrange it for you?

BARBARA: Well, yes—but—I had no idea . . .

PHILLIP (*who is just about to leave the room*): Good-by. And I'm very glad to have met everyone. (*MORTIMER looks over at him.*)

IDA (*abstracted while looking at MORTIMER*): Oh, good-by,

Mr. Bentley, and do come again. Pauline, don't stay out too late.

PAULINE: I won't. Good-by. (PAULINE and PHILLIP *exit*.)

BARBARA (*still excitedly*): I was very nervous naturally when I got up to see Mr. Farber. But of course I knew you had gotten in touch with him—you must have given me a wonderful send-off. He could see I was nervous—said a few rehearsals would put me at my ease—and so—well—I'm in it!

IDA: Mortimer, the child has been elated.

MORTIMER: When do you open up?

BARBARA: In three weeks. They've been rehearsing a week already. The girl they had in my part evidently wasn't satisfactory.

IDA: Tell me, Mortimer, did you have a good trip?

MORTIMER: Yes, Ida, I did. But I'm glad to be back. I was in Washington—but I prefer New York.

BARBARA: Ever since I announced I had the part, Eric has been in one of his moods. I'll have to go upstairs or he'll sink even further into his black pit of melancholy. Isn't it awful, and I'm so happy! I'll try to come downstairs later—(*She is about to leave the room and looks back.*) Pray for me. (BARBARA *exits*.)

MORTIMER (*laughing*): How are you, Mr. Mowbray?

ALEC: Well, I'll tell you. For a reactionary, I guess I'm feeling pretty good.

MORTIMER: If I am not presuming, I might state that the husband of Ida Mowbray couldn't be a reactionary.

ALEC (*shaking his head*): Not if Ida has anything to do about it.

IDA: Alec, you always get things wrong. All I said was that I wished you'd be more active.

ALEC (*rising and walking toward hall door*): Mortimer, I'm leaving my wife with you to take care of the human race. (*He smiles wryly.*) I'm going upstairs to read one of those non-ideological novels from way back in the nineteenth century. (ALEC *exits*. MORTIMER *sinks in chair and closes his eyes*. *There is a momentary pause*. IDA *stands watching him*.)

MORTIMER: Ida, I'm so fatigued.

IDA: You must be. Can I get you something to drink? (*She pulls a small chair near to MORTIMER's.*) You see how difficult Alec is.

MORTIMER: I think he's all right—but he still has to be convinced of the gravity of problems facing the world.

IDA: He isn't as difficult as he sounds, though—I do know that. What will you have to drink?

MORTIMER: I think a Scotch and soda would work miracles. (*He closes his eyes. IDA goes to table and makes drinks.*) I had a dreadful time in Washington. This constant necessity of seeing people takes its toll on me. Oh—if I could only get six months to go away to the country, where I could study and write. (*He sits up with sudden alertness.*) But we're all enlisted for the duration of the fight.

IDA (*holding a bottle in her hand*): Mortimer, I really think you attempt to do too many things—for your own health's sake. Why, you even took time off to help Barbara—I'm sure you did more than merely drop Farber a note.

MORTIMER: Not much more. (*He laughs gently.*) That was relatively easy compared to my other tasks. (*He sinks back in his chair again.*) Ida, you know I enjoy coming to this house so much. I get a real feeling of relaxation here. You have made your home a cultural oasis.

IDA (*stopping what she is doing and looking up*): It's been an uphill fight to bring any culture here with Alec. Alec really has much of the Babbitt in him. Take his first editions—do you know he is still proud of his Cabell first editions—and Cabell is so passé.

MORTIMER (*closing his eyes*): Cabell, ah, Cabell! A dated and derisive stylist. History has already taken care of Cabell.

IDA: Do you think, Mortimer, that the day will come when history will treat James Joyce as it has already treated Cabell?

MORTIMER: James Joyce is a static realist. History will smile upon him with condescension.

IDA (*finishing with the drinks*): Exactly; that's what I've always felt. You express yourself so eloquently, Mortimer. You

know, we really ought to have a little more outspokenness in our criticism. I like criticism the way you give it. Mortimer, you always hit the nail on the head. (*She comes over with the drinks and hands him a glass.*) This will pick you up. (*They raise their glasses to each other before taking a sip.*) Mortimer, it's very flattering to me that you come to see me when you just got back to New York—almost before you've had time to catch your breath.

MORTIMER: I was just so tired, Ida. I could think of no nicer place to come to. (*Telephone rings; IDA goes to answer it.*) That might be for me.

IDA (*at telephone*): Hello? Hello!—Just a minute, please. (*She turns to MORTIMER.*) Someone wants to speak to you. (*MORTIMER goes to telephone.*)

MORTIMER (*speaking in a very mysterious manner*): Hello?—Yes—I just arrived . . . I don't know—it's indefinite—I have some very urgent matters to attend to . . . Make a memorandum for me and I shall attend to it tomorrow . . . Yes . . . I shall attend to all the arrangements . . . Good-by. (*He returns to his chair.*) Ida, there is no rest for the weary.

IDA (*as he sits down*): But why did you tell anyone where you were?

MORTIMER (*slightly ministerial*): I was expecting to hear about an important matter. (*He picks up his drink, takes a sip, and then sets down the glass.*) It was a surprise to me to find Phillip Bentley in your home.

IDA: You know him?

MORTIMER: No—but I know of him. He has very bad leanings.

IDA (*semi-apologetically*): Has he really? I know nothing about him. Pauline brought him here for the first time tonight.

MORTIMER: Evidently his make-up is not so obvious. I was quite shocked to run into him here. Bentley the Philosopher! (*He laughs derisively.*)

IDA: I don't know him, Mortimer. What is there about him?

MORTIMER (*as though he were describing a murderer*): He is an ideological termite.

IDA: What has he done?

MORTIMER: He knows much less than he thinks he knows.

IDA: But tell me! Be specific, Mortimer.

MORTIMER: He is not to be trusted. (*Again speaking as if in reference to a criminal.*) He is an enemy of dialectical materialism. Do you know what that means? (*He is pointing his finger at her and smiling. She looks at him, baffled and taken aback.*)

IDA (*nodding her head affirmatively*): Why . . . yes . . .

MORTIMER (*still pointing his finger—he smiles at her with genial condescension*): Are you sure that you know?

IDA (*frightened*): No.

MORTIMER: I will explain to you, Ida, what it means to be an enemy of dialectical materialism. (*He gets up, puts his hands in his pockets, walks up and down a moment—while she watches him. He speaks as if he were explaining the A B C's to a child.*) There are two forms of logic—simple logic—the logic of Aristotle, that is, and dialectical materialism. (*He looks at IDA as though he were about to spring some big news.*) Now, this may all seem far removed from the important things of ordinary life—but it isn't. (*He pauses while he holds her with his eyes.*) Now, first, what does simple logic say? Simple logic says that yes is yes—and no is no. Is that clear, Ida?

IDA: I think it is.

MORTIMER (*smiling condescendingly. As he continues with his explanation he speaks more slowly and more precisely, and in the following speech he uses his hands to illustrate*): Simple logic is limited. Do—you—know—why? It is limited because it is static. (*He pauses triumphantly. Slowly and dramatically.*) It tells us what things are in the world—but it does not tell us what things are becoming. Now, take the case of a young man who has down on his cheek. (*His hand has gone to his cheek.*) Now the time comes when it is no longer down—and he has a beard. (*With a quick stroke his hand indicates a full-grown beard.*) But before he has a beard—he has down on his face. There is a time when it is neither a beard nor is it

down. (*He faces her full.*) Now, with a simple logic—how can you answer that question?

IDA (*in bewilderment*): I don't know.

MORTIMER (*with the conviction of an evangelist*): You *can't*. But you can with dialectics. Because with dialectics—you can see things *becoming* something else. With dialectics you answer *not yes* or *not no*. You say *yes and no*. You say that the down *is* down, and it is *not* down—because it is something else. (*He gestures again.*) It is becoming a beard. And *that*, Ida, is the great law of dialectical materialism which tells us of the transformation of quantity into quality. (*His eyes rest on her for a moment before she speaks.*)

IDA (*not quite certain what she should say*): Doesn't Phillip Bentley know about it?

MORTIMER (*almost conspiratorially*): He masquerades like a wolf in lamb's clothing. He hides in his philosopher's garb and poisons and corrupts the minds of young students. (*He shakes his finger at her.*) Ida, I'm pretty familiar with what goes on in the academic world. I have received many bad reports of that man.

IDA (*anxiously*): What are they?

MORTIMER (*with some piety*): He is a wrecker in the Teachers' Union. He goes to every meeting and tries to disrupt it—and he breaks the unity of the Progressives in their struggle against Fascism.

IDA: But he said that his brother died fighting for Loyalist Spain. He said he was an anti-Fascist.

MORTIMER: Of course. That's his tactic. He uses his brother's heroic death as a blind to cover up his own undercover work.

IDA (*shocked*): But how could Pauline associate with such a man?

MORTIMER: Is it a serious relationship with Pauline?

IDA: I don't know. I don't think so. She's given no intimation that it is.

MORTIMER: Well, be careful. Also, he's a married man. I know his wife. He deserted her. And he is a parvenu who cul-

tivates rich young girls—using their friends and families. Ida, I'm warning you as a friend.

IDA: If what you say is true—

MORTIMER (*with finality*): It is true!

IDA: What shall I do?

MORTIMER (*ministerial*): There are ways of counteracting him. Firstly, the thing to do is to inform Pauline. But there's nothing to worry about. *Nothing that can't be fixed.*

IDA: I, who prided myself on my ability to raise my children—but you know, Mortimer, Pauline is really all right. She's young and perhaps not serious enough—but that's because she's been raised too carefully. It's my fault. But I raised her before I knew what I now know. I must get her to participate in my work. (MORTIMER *nods*. IDA *looks down in her lap*.) I've worked so much on our Committee lately, I've hardly been home—(*She looks up suddenly with great animation.*) Do you know who I've just induced to join our Committee?

MORTIMER: Mrs. Biemiller.

IDA (*amazed*): Mortimer, you know everything. Now, tell me how you knew. (MORTIMER *laughs*.) How do you have time to find out so many things?

MORTIMER: I ran into Miss Rutger who works in your Committee office while I was on my way here. It is gratifying news, I needn't tell you, to know that you've won her over.

IDA (*rather gushingly*): Oh, my dear, I worked hard on her. She's so naïve about these matters. I had her to tea—and then I went to lunch with her—and I took her to the theater—and I took her backstage to meet Dorothy Bellington from the cast of *Today Is Tomorrow*. Oh—she was so flattered. And *when she learned* that a woman like Dorothy Bellington was co-operating with our Committee—well, *that* was the straw that broke the camel's back. She gave us five hundred dollars. But you know, Mortimer, she's very naïve, and we have to educate her.

MORTIMER: That was excellent. Could you arrange for me to meet her? (*He sinks back in his chair and puts his hands*

over his eyes. He speaks in this position.) You must forgive me. I'm so worn out. (ALEC comes in wearing his dressing gown over his clothes and goes to a bookshelf. He speaks as he enters.)

ALEC: Don't let me disturb the work. I just wanted to get a book from off the shelf. (MORTIMER sits up immediately. IDA watches her husband, annoyed.) Now, don't let me disturb you. (ALEC exits.)

IDA (looking at MORTIMER, who relaxes again): I feel I do so little when I think of the work you're doing. All the lecturing and organizing—and everything.

MORTIMER: Do you know what my ambition in life really is?

IDA: What?

MORTIMER: To be a creative artist. When I was young—I wanted to be a poet, an artist. But then I have no regrets. We can't all be what we hoped we would. (He sighs.)

IDA: But, Mortimer, maybe you should write. Maybe you made a mistake.

MORTIMER: No—I have made no mistake. (He shakes his head mournfully.) First, man must have a chance to be alive. I didn't know that then. First, they must be shown *how* to be alive. First, man must be released from the kingdom of necessity to enter the kingdom of freedom. People are better than the Economic Royalists will let them be. People are better—but they are made mute. (He closes his eyes again. Ida looks at him with admiration.) But, Ida, I want to ask you something that's a little favor.

IDA: Of course. What is it?

MORTIMER: I have a friend, a German refugee—she is a very fine woman—

IDA: Yes?

MORTIMER: Her family is still in Germany, and she is being watched over here by the Gestapo—would it be any trouble if her mail came here?

IDA: Why, not at all.

MORTIMER: It would come addressed to L. M. Smith, perhaps Lucy Smith, care of you.

IDA: Well, that won't be any trouble.

MORTIMER (*lowering his voice*): I wouldn't say anything about it to anyone. We don't want to jeopardize the lady—you understand?

IDA: It's nobody else's business. Just think no more of it. But how will I get it to her?

MORTIMER: Just keep it until you see me. I'll take care of it. Now—there is a little matter about which I should like your advice. It concerns plans for a party—(*ERIC enters with one page of typed manuscript in his hand.*)

IDA (*looking at him*): Oh, hello, Eric.

ERIC: Hello! Hello, Mortimer. Am I interrupting anything important?

MORTIMER: Have you forgiven Barbara for her part?

ERIC: That's your responsibility. I don't want to discuss Barbara's acting career. Ida, I just finished writing a page of my novel. Would you read it?

IDA: Why, Eric, I couldn't do justice to it now. I'm in the middle of discussing something important.

ERIC (*turning to walk out—annoyed*): Oh, all right then. In that case I wouldn't think of intruding with my novel. (*ERIC exits.*)

IDA: Eric is so trying. Every time he writes a paragraph, everybody in the house has to read it. But, Mortimer, you were talking about a party. Did you want it soon?

MORTIMER: I think so. Catherine Blackburn has just returned from Europe. I was thinking that it would be an excellent idea to hold a party in her honor before she returns to Hollywood—perhaps it might be held under the auspices of your Committee. It would be very good publicity, and at the party you could sell drinks, have a roulette wheel, and auction off autographed books and manuscripts. What do you think?

IDA: That would be wonderful. Couldn't we have it here? You know, I admire her so much. Her writing is so sophisticated—in the best sense, of course. I've always wanted to meet her.

MORTIMER: She's an excellent writer. And do you know, Ida, she's one of the authors who have made Hollywood one of the most progressive cities in the United States today—your home *would* be ideal for the party, if it wouldn't be any trouble.

IDA: It won't be any trouble.

MORTIMER (*fumbling in his pocket and pulling out a piece of paper*): I jotted down a list of persons who have agreed to be sponsors if this party is held. (*He hands her the piece of paper. IDA looks at it and becomes elated.*)

IDA: Why, this is wonderful, Mortimer. And it's a marvelous list of sponsors.

MORTIMER: I know that this will be an added burden of work upon your shoulders—and I was thinking that perhaps you would need someone to assist you. I know a very competent girl who can help you make arrangements and act as your secretary.

IDA: My dear—you think of everything.

MORTIMER: Now, suppose I have this girl—her name is Miriam Strasser—come and see you tomorrow.

IDA: I have so much to do—I *do* need a secretary. Perhaps she would be good to have.

MORTIMER: She's very experienced—and you can trust her.

IDA: Marvelous idea!

MORTIMER: Now, I think that your Committee should defray the preliminary expenses.

IDA: Oh, I wouldn't think of it. Not this one. (*She studies the list of sponsors.*)

MORTIMER (*sighing with fatigue*): I'm so tired—I must get some sleep. (*He rises.*)

IDA: I'm so sorry, Mortimer. Must you go?

MORTIMER: Yes, I must go now, Ida. (*His tone becomes conspiratorial again.*) Remember what I told you about Pauline. You must watch her. If she doesn't get in too late, I would talk with her tonight. This may be a matter of grave importance.

IDA: I won't go to bed without speaking to her.

MORTIMER: Right. (*Subtly commanding.*) Ida, break it off, whatever it is. (*He moves to go.*)

IDA: And when shall I see you again?

MORTIMER (*turning around and running his hand through his hair, thinking*): Let me see—I'll telephone you in the morning. And so will Miss Strasser. Tomorrow we'll decide when to have the party. (*They move toward the door together and shake hands.*) And thank you so much.

IDA: Good night, Mortimer.

MORTIMER: Good night, Ida. (*MORTIMER exits.*)

IDA (*calling after him*): Get a good night's rest, Mortimer. (*She goes to a chair and studies the list. Suddenly she springs up and goes to the telephone. She dials.*) Hello?—Is Mrs. Fairchild at home?—Mrs. Mowbray . . . Hello! Elly, dear . . . how are you? . . . That's too bad . . . I'm a wreck myself. . . . Oh, just everything . . . no sleep . . . (*She laughs.*) Not enough time to think. . . . Yes, I'm afraid I *am* losing weight . . . you've lost five pounds? Well, that's wonderful just as long as you don't lose it in the face . . . No, don't tell me about any new diet . . . I know them all . . . but that's not *new*—not at all. . . . Why, two years ago I was eating baked potato skins and rhubarb . . . Well, I *did* lose weight—but I felt terrible . . . No, Elly, it is not a balanced diet . . . No—(*She laughs.*) . . . Well, outside of dieting, what are you doing? Isn't that too bad . . . Listen, Elly . . . I'm giving a party . . . in about two weeks . . . Well, I'll let you know the exact day tomorrow . . . but you must come. . . . Well—just a minute—(*She picks up her list and reads it.*) Well, Catherine Blackburn—she's just back from Europe—yes, I know—Walter Shannon—uhhummmmm—I *knew* you would be—Marta Lotus, the actress—and her husband—yes—I know—he's brilliant—Sanford Warren, the journalist—yes—yes, Elly. I know, isn't it? Henri Martin, you read his novel—Mr. Farber, the Broadway producer—Percival Hunter, the famous poet—Yes, he ought to get this year's Pulitzer Prize—Ronald Jackson—the Hollywood humorist—(*The curtain falls as IDA continues talking on the phone.*)

ACT ONE, Scene 2

Same as Scene 1.

Three hours later.

MRS. MOWBRAY *has changed to a negligée and is discovered sleeping in an armchair she has pulled over to the door opening into the hall—so that PAULINE cannot pass without discovering her.*

The curtain rises. A second or two passes and then we hear
PAULINE.

VOICE OF PAULINE: Mother! What is it?

IDA (*not knowing where she is for a moment*): Oh, it's you, Pauline. (PAULINE *enters*.)

PAULINE: Mother, what's the matter? Why are you out here?

IDA (*getting up and pulling chair back into room*): Nothing, darling—I was just waiting up for you. I was afraid I'd miss you—

PAULINE: What's the matter? Is anything wrong?

IDA: No, dear. Your mother simply wanted to see you and have a little talk with you . . .

PAULINE: At this hour? You're keeping something from me.

IDA (*seating herself in armchair*): Must there be something wrong if I want to talk to you for a little while?

PAULINE: But it's late, Mother. I'm tired. I need sleep. Why can't we have a little talk tomorrow? Why all of a sudden a little talk?

IDA: Now, don't stand there towering over me. Sit down. Over here. (*She points to a chair close to the one she is sitting in.*)

PAULINE (*taking chair. She puts her head back and closes her eyes as though she were very much bored*): All right. Now let's have our little talk.

IDA: What time is it, Pauline?

PAULINE: Oh, I guess it's a little after one. Possibly one-thirty.

IDA: I thought you said you'd be home early.

PAULINE: Since when is one-thirty too late?

IDA (*very insinuatingly*): May I ask where've you been?

PAULINE: Phillip took me to call on some of his friends.

IDA: In the Village?

PAULINE (*slightly irritated*): No, not in the Village. They live on Seventy-third Street.

IDA: Was it a party?

PAULINE: Not exactly a party. A few people. We just sat around and talked.

IDA: Was it interesting? Did you like them?

PAULINE (*looking at her mother askance*): Yes, I liked them. In fact, I liked them all very much.

IDA: You don't need to sound so irritated. Is there any harm in asking you a few questions?

PAULINE: There's no harm—but I don't see the point.

IDA: You don't have to be so impatient.

PAULINE: I'm trying to control myself, Mother. You've never confronted me with questions of this order—at least you haven't stayed up all night to ask me.

IDA: I'm still your mother.

PAULINE: Your behavior is very strange. Cross-examining me!

IDA: What kind of people have you been with that you should take umbrage at my inquiring about them?

PAULINE: You thought it quite funny last week when I described the party I went to where there was that horrible aggregation of drunks and bums. You weren't even interested in asking who was there.

IDA (*cattily*): Does that preclude any interest I may have in regard to Phillip Bentley and his friends?

PAULINE: I don't like the way you say Phillip Bentley and his friends.

IDA: How long have you known him?

PAULINE: About three months.

IDA: Do you know much *about* him? His personal life, I mean?

PAULINE: He has very little of a personal life. He teaches and he studies—which leaves hardly any room for a personal life.

IDA: Well, everyone has some personal life, Pauline. He's not just an automaton. You sound very evasive.

PAULINE: You and I wouldn't be apt to agree on people. And I don't think, Mother, you are really qualified to judge a man like Bentley. Your record isn't absolutely flawless when it comes to estimating people. You've been the laughing stock of your own family—with the list of discoveries you've imposed on all of us from time to time—including governesses, fake artists, cultists, and fraudulent wise men of every variety.

IDA: I've had to learn a lot, my dear, and what mistakes I may have made have not been unprofitable. I'm older than you, Pauline, and in some ways more astute. I also still feel responsible for you. And protective.

PAULINE: Mother, please. Don't make me say a lot of things I prefer not saying.

IDA: I'm very serious and I might as well come right out and tell you. I don't think you should see a person like this Phillip Bentley.

PAULINE: What makes you say that?

IDA: Oh—after meeting him—and thinking about him—he's no person you should know.

PAULINE: How dare you say that about a person you know nothing about? How dare you! My God, this is wonderful! Staying up in order to tell me this! Feeling responsible for me! Feeling protective! What's the matter with you, Mother?

IDA (*looking helpless*): You're acting preposterously, Pauline. Instead of being grateful for any information I might have—you turn upon me.

PAULINE: What information could you have? You are discussing a person you know nothing about. You're positively arrogant.

IDA: It so happens I do know something about Phillip Bent-

ley . . . and what I have learned—has upset me very much.

PAULINE: Mother, please be specific. What do you know and from what source have you gathered your information?

IDA: Are you interested? Or do you wish merely to upbraid me every time I open my mouth?

PAULINE: Tell me what you *know*.

IDA (*pausing for a moment as though trying to formulate what she must say*): His character is not what it should be.

PAULINE: I said be specific.

IDA: You know, Pauline, or you should know, I'm not an old-fashioned mother. My ideas on the subject of morality are not those I have been brought up with—

PAULINE (*sharply and sarcastically*): Yes—I know. You have always prided yourself both in private and public—on your advanced ideas.

IDA: I simply want to make myself clear. I want you to understand my attitude. I suppose you know Phillip Bentley is a married man—*that* isn't important as far as I am concerned . . .

PAULINE: I know he's married. I also know he is getting a divorce. Is that so extraordinary?

IDA: I've just told you—that, as far as I am concerned, is not important. There are other features to that young man that do alarm me. (*She looks very solicitously at her daughter.*) I assume you do not know certain . . . ah . . . well, certain facts concerning him—facts that I consider of the utmost importance for you to know.

PAULINE: I'm listening.

IDA: First I'd like to ask you—you know I never ask you questions like this—but Pauline—is this a serious relationship? More than a *passing*, shall I say, acquaintance?

PAULINE (*very matter-of-factly*): Yes. It is more than a passing acquaintance. Much more.

IDA: I see. Then I suppose, that being the case, you will have him come to the house frequently.

PAULINE: Well, Mother, I'm used to living here—bringing my friends—

IDA (*interrupting*): Well, of course—that's a totally unnecessary remark—(*She studies her daughter for a moment.*) Pauline, you and I have a kinship in life—quite apart from the fact that you are my daughter—of course, if you weren't, I couldn't talk like this—(*She suddenly becomes very dramatic and intense.*)—but I think it would be calamitous for both of us—if either one of us participated in the life of another that was injurious to either yourself or me.

PAULINE: Mother!

IDA (*continuing in her dramatic tone*): Not only injurious to us as individuals but to masses of human beings. (PAULINE is staring at her.) Phillip Bentley has very bad leanings. You know the work I am doing, Pauline—the money I am raising to fight Fascism—I've stopped having a private life of my own—I'm concentrating all my energies on this horrible menace—

PAULINE: What are you saying?

IDA: How do you think I feel when my own daughter strikes up a relationship with the enemy? (PAULINE laughs loudly and mockingly.) You may laugh. I can see you've been taken in. People have a way of hiding their natural dispositions. (*Very commanding.*) You cannot bring a man to this house like Bentley. He's a very dangerous person, and you should be grateful for the information.

PAULINE: You're talking nonsense. You're absolutely mad!

IDA: Oh, no, I'm not. Mortimer told me a great deal more. He seems to know all about him—and Mortimer isn't one to indulge in lies. He spoke as a friend.

PAULINE: Would he dare say the things he told you to Phillip's face?

IDA: I wouldn't place him in such a position.

PAULINE: Oh, you wouldn't. What about the position you are trying to place me in?

IDA: Naturally, he spoke confidentially.

PAULINE (*raising her voice to a great pitch*): They are all lies. Lies!

IDA: Please don't scream out at this hour of the night.

PAULINE: You're appalling!

IDA: There's no use talking to you. You have an emotional bias—and you're beyond the reach of reason. (*She pauses.*) Of course—I can't command you not to see him and I can't forbid you to bring him to the house . . .

PAULINE: No, you can't. You can't even prejudice me. You're ridiculous. Your motives are noble. All your motives have always been noble. You're a goddamn fool!

IDA: Pauline!

PAULINE (*bordering on hysteria*): This isn't the first time either. Usually you've been a fool in a harmless way. *Now* you're trying to affect the lives of people—*now* you've gone in for something bigger! Mother, you're disgusting.

IDA (*hurt*): Very well. (*She assumes a martyr-like tone.*) Lead your own life—make your own mistakes.

PAULINE: They'll be mine and not yours. What else did Mortimer have to say? You don't need to hold back anything.

IDA: He also told me something of his treatment of his wife. As I say, these were not the things that disconcerted me. (*She resumes her former dramatic tone.*) But what alarmed me, Pauline, was what he had to say about his political orientation. I really can't forgive a man who dishonors his own brother's heroic death to do undercover work for the *Fascists*.

PAULINE: They are all lies. And I can prove it. (*She starts to leave the room.*) The next time Mortimer comes to this house he'll see me!

IDA: There's nothing for you to say to Mortimer. No one for you to attack and wreck your vengeance on but me. What he told me was very confidential.

PAULINE: You've betrayed his confidence to me—

IDA: Have you no regard for my feelings?

PAULINE: What you've told me is nothing less than slander—and I'm ashamed of you.

IDA: I'm sorry, Pauline, that your mind is so closed. You evidently are not aware of the implications—(*She says the next more to herself. She is becoming tearful.*) And to think that the fight against Fascism exists now in my own home . . .

PAULINE (*with disgust*): There's no use talking to you.

IDA (*going to Pauline*): You've said terrible things to me, Pauline. You've never spoken to me in your life like this. I suppose I shall have to survive your contempt—but you just don't know—you have absolutely no realization—

PAULINE (*drawing away from her mother*): Let me alone. Please don't say anything else. Go away from me. Phillip Bentley is the finest person I have ever known in my life. And when he gets his divorce I am going to marry him. Don't say one more word to me—(PAULINE dashes out of the room.)

IDA (*taking a step or two in direction of door*): Pauline, please—(She doesn't move for a moment—slowly she turns around and stares out as though stunned. Then she moves to put out a lamp.)

Curtain

ACT TWO, Scene 1

Same as Scene 1.

Three weeks later on a Saturday morning—fairly late, getting on to lunch.

The curtain rises showing MISS STRASSER, the secretary, at her desk. IDA has changed the room slightly, having had another desk moved into the room. Also a small filing cabinet. It is placed down stage Left.

MISS STRASSER is in her middle twenties. She is plain and unattractive, short and dumpy. She dresses in an unflattering way. She seems to be mirthless and literal-minded.

LOUISE, the maid, is working about the room while STRASSER types at her desk. VINCENT, the butler, comes in.

VINCENT comes up to LOUISE and whispers into her ear. LOUISE looks over at STRASSER to be sure that she is not noticing them. She pantomimes with her head in agreement. VINCENT takes a quick glance at STRASSER, who continues oblivious of both of them. He conveys in pantomime and with movement of his lips without any sound that they don't like the secretary being there. LOUISE glances at STRASSER again and

this time catches her eye. STRASSER stares at them piercingly now, and VINCENT goes out. STRASSER continues with her typing.

IDA (*wearing a negligée. She breezes in breathlessly*): I'm so sorry—I had no idea it was so late—good morning, Louise—

LOUISE: Good morning, Mrs. Mowbray. (LOUISE exits.)

IDA (*unable to stand in one place and moving about nervously*): Oh—everything is just too much for me—I don't have time to breathe any more and I'm so tired—I don't get enough sleep—my dear Miss Strasser—you must forgive me. (*She stops for a moment at MISS STRASSER's forbidding face.*) But—well—I just couldn't help it—you—you—did have those letters to finish we couldn't get off yesterday, didn't you—

MISS STRASSER (*very matter-of-factly*): I'm just finishing them.

IDA (*distracted*): Well, that's good—do you know if Pauline has gone out this morning? (*She starts to leave the room before MISS STRASSER can answer—to inquire from one of the servants about PAULINE.*) I'm just being persecuted in my own home. (IDA exits. *Just outside door.*) Louise, has Miss Pauline gone out this morning?

LOUISE: I think she's upstairs, Mrs. Mowbray.

IDA (*returning*): Oh, God help me—I never even see my own daughter any more. (*Telephone rings. Simultaneously with the telephone ringing SANFORD WARREN walks briskly into the room. He is a man in his late thirties or early forties, but is youthful in appearance. He dresses very smartly and in good taste. He is a journalist who has traveled much and therefore meets people easily. In fact, his manner is very frequently flippant and breezy.*)

SANDY: Good morning. (*He speaks in a way that conveys he has been here often and is utterly at home.*)

MISS STRASSER (*answering telephone*): Hello? Yes? Yes, he's right here—(*She turns to SANDY.*) It's for you.

SANDY: Good morning, Mrs. Mowbray. (*He goes to tele-*

phone.) Hello. . . . Yes—I'm just finishing the article. . . . I'll send it over to you by special messenger this morning—and, listen, I want a bigger spread on the cover for this article than what you gave me last time . . . well, put my name in bigger type—no—I have a better idea—come on over and have lunch with me here—all right—I'll see you later, Bill—so long. (*He puts up phone. Turning to IDA.*) I invited Bill Weston over to lunch, Mrs. Mowbray. I hope you don't mind.

IDA: Why, of course not, Sandy. It's perfectly all right.

SANDY: I thought it would be. See you later. (*He exits and, as he does, he throws a kiss to STRASSER.*)

IDA: Barbara, the poor child—I feel so sorry for her—Mr. Atkinson's review wasn't very favorable—were you at the opening last night, Miss Strasser?

MISS STRASSER: I never have time to go to the theater. I had to go to a meeting.

IDA: Well, the poor child was so nervous—she did do a little muffling—but, all things considered—the child did well—(*SANDY rushes back into room. He looks for The Times, spots it on divan immediately.*)

SANDY: Ah—that's what I came down for and forgot—(*He grabs the paper and exits.*)

IDA: Oh, dear—I'm so at odds with myself today—and my own daughter Pauline isn't speaking to me—and I was up so late—I wish you'd been there, Miss Strasser—it was an oversight on my part not to have arranged it—but you know how hard we've been working—(*ERIC strolls in, relaxes on the divan, and thumbs a magazine.*) Hello, Eric. I hope you'll be sympathetic to Barbara. She needs real tenderness now—oh, but she looked perfectly lovely. That little suit from Elizabeth Hawes was perfectly beautiful. Miss Hawes was very clever, the way she was able to make Barbara look like a poor girl. It was her nervousness. And nothing else. Otherwise her performance would have been glowing.

ERIC: Why do you say that? Just because she's your daughter? She was terrible—she didn't even get mentioned in one paper. The critics didn't even know she was on the stage.

IDA: Oh, Eric, you've been so co-operative lately with me in everything—but you're so hard on poor Barbara.

MISS STRASSER (*in a rather curt fashion*): Shall we go on, Mrs. Mowbray?

IDA: Yes—yes—

MISS STRASSER: What about getting off those other letters I made notations of yesterday? You have to write to Mrs. Lorenz.

IDA: Oh, yes—let me see—a letter to Mrs. Lorenz—(MISS STRASSER *sets herself for dictation*. IDA *is deep in thought for a moment*. She starts to walk up and down the room. She assumes quite a different tone while she dictates.) My dear Mrs. Lorenz—I am very sorry that I was unable to attend your Bingo Party for Progress—I—I—received the check for sixty-nine dollars and fifty-three cents which you made at that party—and wish to thank you for it. I am grateful to you—and want to express my gratitude—and that of the Anti-Fascist Committee for Peace and Democracy—I think that your idea for Bingo Parties for Progress all over the country is an excellent suggestion. I—I shall take it up at my next Committee meeting—and I'm sure that we will be able to initiate the idea.—Thanking you, I am—Sincerely yours—Ida M. Mowbray—Treasurer etc. (She looks at MISS STRASSER, who is all set to take another letter.) I can't possibly continue—not until I've made a phone call or two. (MISS STRASSER looks disgusted. IDA dials a number. As telephone conversation begins ERIC leaves the room.) Hello? I want to speak with Mrs. Biemiller—yes—I'll wait—(She turns to MISS STRASSER.) Would you bring me that mail over there on the table—I haven't had an opportunity to look at it yet—(MISS STRASSER brings her a stack of letters and IDA fumbles through the mail with her free hand.) Frances! . . . Hello, my dear—I'm a wreck as usual—same old story—I was worried—I was afraid I might not catch you in time—yes—I thought Barbara did very well considering—Barbara will be pleased to know you liked her—Frances—I can't possibly meet you. . . . No—I cannot make the picket line today. . . . No, Frances, I can't—but I *will* be there next Wednesday—that's the day Raina Randolph who just ar-

rived from Hollywood will picket with us—now, you go any-way without me—you must—lunch?—out of the question—I wish you could see me—I'm burdened down—well, you could come here for lunch—you don't have to picket until four—you'll come for lunch?—good!—One more thing, Frances—don't forget—you are not to wear silk stockings—No—no—your summer mink coat is perfectly all right—you see, Frances—this a boycott line—No—No. Frances—wearing your mink coat won't be in bad taste—No—No—Frances dear—the picket line is to boycott Japan—and you can't wear silk stockings—then I'll see you later—yes—don't be late—Good-by, Frances. (*She puts down phone.* MISS STRASSER looks pained at IDA. *She sits there waiting for her work to go on.* IDA's tone is one of half fright at MISS STRASSER.) I won't make any more telephone calls right now—I'm sorry, Miss Strasser—(*She takes some letters from the stack and places them between the covers of a magazine close by.*) What was the next letter?

MISS STRASSER: Mrs. Hubbard.

IDA: Oh, yes—to Mrs. Hubbard—just say—oh—my dear Mrs. Hubbard—Thank you so much—oh, just express my profound gratitude and so forth—and just close it in the usual way—now take a letter to Mr. Horace Malkin. (*She moves to another chair.*) My dear Mr. Malkin—I want to express my gratitude and that of our Committee—for your generosity in offering the use of your home for a party in the near future—I shall hope to see you this coming week—to discuss the details of said party—(*At this moment LOUISE, the maid, passes the door, and IDA sees her.*) Oh, Louise—excuse me one moment, Miss Strasser—I forgot all about lunch—(*LOUISE comes into the room.*) About lunch, Louise, will you tell Nellie that there'll be . . . (*she counts on her fingers*)—eight for lunch—there might be one or two more but I doubt it—just have her make one of her salads—with some cold chicken—and some cheese—tell her not to bother too much—(*Her tone becomes subdued.*) And will you ask Miss Pauline to come downstairs to see me?

LOUISE: Yes, Mrs. Mowbray. (LOUISE *exits*.)

IDA: What was the last thing I dictated, Miss Strasser?

MISS STRASSER: I shall hope to see you this coming week to discuss the details of said party—

IDA: Oh, yes—ah—new paragraph—we live in perilous times, my dear Mr. Malkin—and we must all put our shoulders to the wheel—we must even dedicate our pleasures and our social life to doing something for a better world—so that our children will not have to fight the menace which we face. Cordially—Ida M. Mowbray—Treasurer—etc. etc.—(*She moves her hand over her eyes distractedly*.) Oh, yes—I mustn't forget the cards—Miss Strasser, will you arrange to have two hundred engraved cards printed to read—(*She thinks for a moment*.) "Come and Drink Champagne and play Games of Chance for the suffering people of China at the home of Mrs. Frances Biemiller—1140 Park Avenue—June 8th, 1939—from eight-thirty on"—you have the list of sponsors—(*She has an afterthought*.) You better strike out the suffering people of China and just make it the people of China, Miss Strasser dear. (PAULINE *enters*. Her face is immobile. Her manner is sharp and curt—bordering on being rude. She doesn't come far into the room.)

PAULINE: What was it you wanted?

IDA (*taken aback by PAULINE's tone*): I just wanted to know . . . I . . . well . . . if you were going to be home for lunch, Pauline.

PAULINE: I hadn't been planning to go out until after lunch.

IDA: I see—

PAULINE: Does it make any difference?

IDA: Yes—I think it does. Because if you are having lunch at home—I don't want you to make it unendurable for me with your sarcastic remarks that you don't seem to be able to avoid making—there will be people here for lunch today.

PAULINE: If you mean by people—Mortimer—it will be no sacrifice on my part to lunch alone.

IDA: I don't understand your attitude. I sometimes think it would have been better if you had had Phillip Bentley con-

front Mortimer—it would have been better for all of us than for you to be carrying on the way you are. As it is—you have resorted to persecuting me—

PAULINE: Do you think Phillip Bentley would make a special trip to see Mortimer? And as for my little meeting with that estimable character—when I confronted him with his accusations—he was so wormlike—and you—there—at his side—defending him—ugh—I couldn't even talk to him.

IDA: I can see with my own eyes—already—how Phillip Bentley is poisoning your mind. (*Voices off stage. ERIC and BARBARA can be heard quarreling.*)

PAULINE: If it weren't for Father—I'd move out of this house.

IDA (*she gasps*): Pauline! (*ERIC and BARBARA enter arguing. BARBARA comes in first. She is dressed to go out.*) You're ridiculously stubborn and difficult.

BARBARA: This is no time to argue with me, Eric. I have to go to a rehearsal before the matinee—(*She sees that she has come on in the midst of a quarrel between PAULINE and IDA.*) Mother, are you and Pauline still clawing over such nonsense? When Eric and I fight, at least it's over something serious. (*The doorbell has rung and we hear it.*)

ERIC: No wonder I can't get any work done. It's your fault.

BARBARA: Well, how can I work—with you the way you are about my work.

ERIC: Your work! Did anyone ever tell you that there's a profound difference between acting and elocution?

BARBARA (*sarcastically*): No, you're the first person who ever made that discovery. Well, anyway, Sanford Warren doesn't seem to agree with you. He said he was moved by my performance. (*LOUISE enters with a telegram.*)

LOUISE: A telegram for you, Mrs. Mowbray.

IDA: Miss Strasser, will you read it to me? (*LOUISE brings the telegram to MISS STRASSER, who opens it.*)

MISS STRASSER (*reading telegram*): "Can you get prominent author to send greetings for opening of Rummage Sale and Old Clothes—Evanston, Illinois—benefit Anti-Fascist Com-

mittee stop—important—signed Mrs. T. Cadwalader Martin.”

IDA (*very seriously*): I'll tend to that later. I'll speak to Sanford Warren. (MISS STRASSER *makes a note.*)

BARBARA: You! You haven't even been able to finish a book in four years. Why can't you write like Sanford Warren and be read?

ERIC: How can I when I have a stage-struck wife who's acting all the time—morning, noon, and night? And please don't compare me with a journalist. (BARBARA *starts crying.*)

BARBARA: Even if you did write more, it wouldn't be any good.

PAULINE (*who has been listening and watching the previous scene interestedly*): Mother, couldn't you get Mr. Mortimer to arbitrate? I'm having lunch alone—upstairs. (PAULINE *exits. The telephone rings.*)

MISS STRASSER: Hello? Yes—who's calling, please? . . . Just a moment. (*She turns to IDA.*) Mrs. Bellinger.

IDA (*going to telephone*): Hello! Yes, Mrs. Bellinger—(*As she starts talking, BARBARA and ERIC start arguing again.*)

BARBARA: After all—who are you? What do you know about acting?

ERIC: As little as you do.

IDA (*to ERIC and BARBARA*): I can't hear if you don't keep still. (*Into phone.*) Just a second Mrs. Bellinger—(*To ERIC and BARBARA.*) You have a whole floor at the top of the house in which to fight. (*Into phone.*) Yes, Mrs. Bellinger—I'm sorry—so much is going on here—why, yes—I think we could auction it off—that would be splendid—yes—do send it over. I'm very grateful. Very. Thank you, Mrs. Bellinger—good-by. (*She turns to ERIC and BARBARA.*) Please, children. Kiss and make up. My nerves are on edge.

BARBARA (*in tears, leaving*): You are unnerving me with your meanness. (BARBARA *exits.*)

IDA: Eric, this is no time for you to fight with Barbara—you may be right—but this is not the moment for you to assert yourself. (*She turns around to look at MISS STRASSER, who is waiting not too patiently.*) I'm sorry, my dear Miss Strasser—

but you can see for yourself the things I have to cope with—
(*She turns back to ERIC.*) Eric, dear, could you picket with Mrs. Biemiller this afternoon? I really think she would prefer to go with you than go alone. You said you were going. She's not as used to the picket line as I am. Would you, Eric. . . .

ERIC: Yes—but would you please ask her not to engage me in conversation about literature.

IDA: Eric, the poor woman is just trying to learn.

ERIC (*as he moves toward door*): But I'm not an educational institution. (*ERIC exits.*)

IDA (*sighing*): The only thing that has made me happy these past weeks is Eric's attitude. Miss Strasser, I firmly believe that he's getting social consciousness. If only he wouldn't be so sarcastic. (*ALEC walks gingerly into the room. He observes MISS STRASSER.*)

ALEC: Good morning, Ida. Any new developments in France?

IDA: You needn't be sarcastic, Alec, when I'm very busy.

ALEC: I was only asking you for information. Where's Pauline?

IDA: Upstairs.

ALEC (*after pausing for a moment*): I don't like this situation between you and Pauline. (*IDA starts to speak, gasps for a word, but gets no further.*) Ida, dear—you know, you always boasted that you were raising your daughters to live their own lives. You always said you wanted them to be individuals. And now, here you are—messing in Pauline's life, going back on all you've said. And you won't take your own daughter's word against this political sage we have around here.

IDA: Oh, Alec, you're so confused. You're so politically naïve that it's impossible to talk to you. (*She becomes extremely irritated.*) I'm very busy, Alec, and I don't see why you should interrupt my work with irrelevancies. We agreed that I was to use this room during the daytime as my office. (*BUTLER stands in doorway with an enormous stack of books.*) What are those, Vincent?

VINCENT: These books just arrived by special messenger.

IDA: Oh, yes. I know. Put them over there in the corner, Vincent. (VINCENT *places the books and exits.*) They're the autographed copies of Catherine Blackburn's poems we're going to auction off at different parties. (*She looks at ALEC, who seems strangely amused.*) Alec, are you going to be here for lunch?

ALEC: Well—I thought I would. Today is Saturday. Of course, if I'm in the way—I usually have luncheon at home on Saturdays.

IDA: Alec, I asked Mrs. Biemiller and Mortimer to luncheon, and you don't seem to like them.

ALEC: Has Mrs. Biemiller got religion, too?

IDA: Alec, everybody in the world isn't as cynical as you are. Some people must have something to live for, and it's a good thing they have. Mrs. Biemiller is picketing this afternoon.

ALEC: What cause is on the day's agenda for salvation? (IDA *refuses to answer. Impatient, she looks at MISS STRASSER, indicating that she wants to continue with her work.*) I want to ask you a serious question, Ida.

IDA: Really a serious one—or are you going to try and poke more feeble fun at me?

ALEC (*truly serious*): No—this is very serious. I wanted to invite my client, Mr. Thorne, to dinner Monday night. Of course, now, if I do, and Mr. Thorne can't distinguish the difference between my home and the Bronx Zoo, well, that would be unfortunate.

IDA: That Liberty Leaguer! Alec, he's a Tory.

ALEC: Well, he does kind of suspect that Landon was inclined to Socialism—but he pays me a retainer fee of ten thousand dollars. You see, Ida dear, we have to *use* him.

IDA: Miss Strasser, what is my schedule for Monday? (MISS STRASSER *looks at memorandum book.*)

ALEC: Also, I wanted to ask you, Ida—if you knew how long our guest Sanford Warren is staying with us?

IDA: I really don't know—I can't very well ask him to leave after inviting him, can I? He's a very well-informed journalist—I should think you'd be pleased to have him.

MISS STRASSER: This is your Monday schedule, Mrs. Mowbray. Dictation, ten to twelve—Conference, Sharecroppers' Committee, twelve to one—luncheon Society of Progressive Poets, one to two—protest visit to Italian Consulate, two-thirty—lecture, on Child Welfare in Soviet Armenia, four o'clock—cocktail party in honor of visiting delegation of People's Front of Chile, five-thirty—you have nothing scheduled in the evening.

IDA: All right, Alec.

ALEC (*very meekly*): Will it be possible to have Mr. Thorne here without any delegation to greet him?

IDA: Alec, stop being funny.

ALEC: You see, Ida darling, if you want to serve the human race, I have to be nice to Mr. Thorne and others. And I would prefer it if we could just have the family. Do you mind? I won't ask for my home for the rest of the week.

IDA: You don't need to put things that way—but Sanford is living here as our guest—

ALEC: Couldn't Sanford entertain your visiting friends from Chile?

IDA: I'll arrange it, and you needn't worry and act so abused. Now, I'm busy—and if I tolerate that dull and boring Tory client of yours, the least you can do is to be civil to Mrs. Biemiller if you are staying for luncheon.

ALEC: No—I—ah—think I'll forego the pleasure of Mrs. Biemiller's company—at least for today—Pauline's going to be home for lunch? (IDA *nods*.) I'll have lunch with her—in the little music room—or, if you prefer me further away, we'll lunch in my room upstairs—

IDA: You're so difficult, Alec. (SANFORD WARREN *comes into the room*.)

SANDY: Good morning, everybody!

IDA: Good morning, Sandy. (SANDY *makes for a big arm-chair and plops down in it—his legs extended out straight*.) Did you finish your article?

SANDY: Yeah. What I need is a drink.

IDA (*starting to move toward door*): Well, there's some

right there. (*She points to a table with bottles and glasses.*) If I don't change from this negligée, I won't be dressed in time for lunch—oh, my mail—(*She goes to table and picks up all the letters. She turns and looks at ALEC, fearful of leaving him alone with SANDY.*)

SANDY: How are you, Mr. Mowbray?

ALEC: I'm all right, thank you.

IDA (*nervously*): Are you going to have a little chat with Sandy?

ALEC: No. I have some work to do.

IDA (*relieved*): I see. . . . (*IDA exits.*)

SANDY (*leaping up to get himself a drink*): Have a drink with me. Have a drink on my finished article.

ALEC: No thanks. What is it about? Your article?

SANDY (*with a drink in hand*): Lawyers. I gave 'em hell. (*He swallows drink in one gulp.*)

ALEC: Perhaps you should have asked me some questions about it for more material.

SANDY: I know the racket. I didn't need any more information.

ALEC: Well—as long as you weren't too hard on us lawyers.

SANDY (*smiling knowingly*): I didn't pull my punches.

ALEC: That'll make interesting reading.

SANDY (*getting himself another drink*): Well, you'll see.

ALEC: I shall anticipate reading about my own profession. (*He starts to move toward door.*) I'm very glad, Mr. Warren, that living here as our guest has offered you other advantages as well as those of comfort.

SANDY (*laughing*): How long have I been here?

ALEC (*rather hopelessly*): I don't know.

SANDY (*turning to MISS STRASSER*): How long have I been here, Miss Strasser?

MISS STRASSER: It will be exactly two weeks on Monday at four o'clock in the afternoon.

SANDY: Really? Time flies. It's been swell here, and I really like you.

ALEC (*finally deciding to leave*): Thank you, Mr. Warren.

If my wife brings enough guests, I may win a popularity contest yet in my own home. Make yourself at home. (ALEC exits. *There is a pause while MISS STRASSER makes certain ALEC is out of hearing distance.*)

MISS STRASSER: Comrade Warren, I don't like working in this strata.

SANDY: What's the matter with it? (MISS STRASSER gets up and goes around her desk for something. Her back is turned toward SANDY.)

MISS STRASSER: I like fighting the bourgeoisie better than winning them over. (*While she is talking and working, SANDY grins and tiptoes up to her; he pinches her buttocks. She jumps. SANDY steps back and laughs.*) Comrade Warren, pinching my fanny is not a weapon of the workers in the fight against Fascism.

SANDY (*looking her up and down*): You got something there, Toots. (*He walks away and gets a drink. MISS STRASSER goes on working. He sits down with drink in hand. He looks at MISS STRASSER.*) Say, Toots, have you got a sex life? (*She looks at him contemptuously and then goes on with her work.*) A girl like you, Toots, ought to have a boy friend.

MISS STRASSER: Comrade Warren, I'm busy. It will do you no good to make passes at me.

SANDY (*jumping forward in surprise and looks at her amazed*): What?

MISS STRASSER (*turning around and looking at him*): The fact that I believe in sexual freedom should give you no encouragement; you can't make me.

SANDY (*looking at her again, scrutinizingly*): I guess I can't. (MISS STRASSER goes back around to her desk and sits down. He stretches out his feet.) Toots, you married?

MISS STRASSER: No! And my name isn't Toots.

SANDY: I called you Toots because I thought it went with your personality. I guess you don't want to talk to me.

MISS STRASSER: No!

SANDY: Do you want me to go out of the room?

MISS STRASSER: Yes.

SANDY (*getting up and starting to leave. Close to the door he turns to MISS STRASSER*): Now, you're sure you don't want to change your mind.

MISS STRASSER (*very officiously*): Comrade Warren, there are some petitions that Comrade Mortimer wants you to sign.

SANDY (*going back to desk*): Signing protests doesn't cost me anything. (*MISS STRASSER hands him two petitions. He signs them quickly without looking at them. He starts toward door again. Turning toward her.*) By the way, what did I protest against this time?

MISS STRASSER: One is for China and the other is for Albania.

SANDY: Well, that's all right. (*As he leaves.*) Are the poor Albanians starving again? (*SANDY runs into MORTIMER just outside the door. The telephone rings as MORTIMER enters and SANDY comes back into the room with him. MORTIMER and SANDY converse quietly while MISS STRASSER is speaking over the telephone.*)

MISS STRASSER (*answering the telephone*): Hello? Yes—she's busy right now—Can I help you—you shouldn't have sent it here—No—No—it should be sent to Committee headquarters—Mrs. Mowbray does her directives from here—very well—I'll take care of it when it arrives. Good-by. (*She puts up phone.*) People must think this is a warehouse. Some fool is sending a crate of canned goods. It's on the way over.

MORTIMER (*with an unobtrusive air of authority*): Sandy, will you be good enough to stand by that door there and let me know if anyone is coming? I have some private business to discuss with Comrade Strasser. (*SANDY nods, walks over to door, and leans there, smoking a cigarette. There should be the feeling that the conversation between MORTIMER and MISS STRASSER cannot be overheard by SANDY unless they wish him to hear.*)

MORTIMER (*knowingly*): Any news?

MISS STRASSER (*shaking her head affirmatively*): It came. I signed for it. (*She takes a Manila-colored envelope from her bosom and hands it to MORTIMER. MORTIMER looks at envelope a moment and then puts it in his inside coat pocket.*) The mail-

man suspected nothing when I signed for it. No one in the house knows.

MORTIMER: Excellent. Fine work, Comrade Strasser.

MISS STRASSER: I got here before the mailman for the last four mornings to be sure that I could receive it.

MORTIMER: Excellent. (*A pause.*) How is everything?

MISS STRASSER: Very disturbing.

MORTIMER: Why?—What has happened?

MISS STRASSER: Mr. Mowbray.

MORTIMER: Is he continuing to raise objections to Ida's activities?

MISS STRASSER: Mrs. Mowbray is still trying to activize Mr. Mowbray. But she is meeting with difficulties. And this morning in this room—just a few minutes ago—I heard them talking.

MORTIMER: What did he say?

MISS STRASSER: He questioned your veracity. I know that he and Pauline are getting closer. Yesterday I surprised them in the hall, and they were whispering. I did not hear what they said—but from the expression on their faces, their conversation must have been of a political character.

MORTIMER (*profoundly*): Perhaps. (*He pauses.*) Is anything else new?

MISS STRASSER: I was able to read three letters which that Bentley sent to Pauline. Nobody was around, and I made copies of them. (*She takes them out of her pocket.*) Here they are.

MORTIMER (*accepting the letters*): Very good work, Comrade Strasser. (*MISS STRASSER beams at the compliment. MORTIMER looks through the letters very quickly and then puts them in his pocket.*)

MISS STRASSER: I also listened in on a telephone conversation between Pauline and Bentley. She is meeting him this afternoon—and they are going to the Art Museum. She says that she and her father want to have dinner with him next week. I think they are plotting to win over Mr. Mowbray.

MORTIMER: Does Ida know this?

MISS STRASSER: No.

MORTIMER: Be careful. I don't want her to know that you know—*anything*. I shall find a way to impress her with this information. (*He pauses a moment.*) Is there any other news?

MISS STRASSER: This morning, Mr. Mowbray asked if he could have a Liberty League Tory to dinner. Mrs. Mowbray raised objections—but had to agree. He is a client of Mr. Mowbray and his name is Thorne. Mr. Mowbray gets ten thousand a year from him.

MORTIMER: Anything else?

MISS STRASSER: No. Except that Eric and Barbara had a non-political quarrel about last night's play.

SANDY (*raising his voice in warning. He sees ERIC off stage*): Well—if it isn't my old friend, Eric, playing hookey from the great American novel.

MORTIMER (*to MISS STRASSER*): I will speak to you later. I have some more questions to ask you. Don't go until I get the chance to talk with you.

MISS STRASSER: Yes, Comrade Mortimer. (*SANDY has walked back into the room. ERIC enters.*)

ERIC: Hello! Oh, hello, Mortimer.

MORTIMER: Hello, Eric. How is the work going?

ERIC: My work would get on better if I didn't have a stage-struck wife.

MORTIMER (*wagging a finger at ERIC*): Eric, what you need is discipline. You have lived in the ivory tower far too long. Aye, there's the rub, not Barbara. Discipline, my friend, discipline!

ERIC: I'm picketing this afternoon. And I've arranged, thanks to your help, Mortimer, to do an article on it for *The New Freedom*.

MORTIMER (*very pleased*): So you did call them up! Good! That is excellent. It will be very good for you in your work. You mustn't be downhearted, Eric. You're a young man of irrefutable talent.

SANDY: Sure, Eric, a few picket lines and some experiences with the real thing, and you'll be okay.

MORTIMER: To be a writer in times like these, Eric, you must participate in the struggle.

ERIC: It can't do me any harm. I've really been doing better work already since I realized I was in a rut. (VINCENT enters with an enormous vase of long-stemmed roses. He walks solemnly with the vase to table—deposits flowers, adjusts a few knickknacks there, and solemnly departs.)

MORTIMER: Far from doing you harm, it will do you good. But tell me, Eric, when will you have your article on the picketing done?

ERIC: It has to be in by Monday.

MORTIMER: I should like to look at the manuscript before you mail it. You must remember that *The New Freedom* is a liberal weekly, reaching the middle class. It would be very wise for you to say in your article that this picketing proves that the broad masses of the American people, including the middle class, are heart and soul in the struggle against aggression.

ERIC: 'All right, if you say so.

MORTIMER: Very good.

SANDY: The trick, Eric, in journalism, is not the facts. It's the angle that counts. (VINCENT enters with a large packing case.)

VINCENT (addressing MISS STRASSER): Some canned goods.

MISS STRASSER: Put it down anywhere. (VINCENT puts the packing case by MISS STRASSER's desk and exits.)

MORTIMER: And, Eric, you must try to help puncture your father-in-law's prejudices.

SANDY: And you might hint to him that I'm really not the heel he thinks I am.

ERIC: I'll do what I can. (IDA enters carrying the magazine in which she has put the letters. Close on the heels of IDA is VINCENT carrying an enormous canvas. The painting represents the worst type of so-called proletarian art. The colors are loud and clashing. The foreground of the picture shows idealized workers parading with their tools held aloft. Above the paraders are fat capitalists, red flags, barricades, etc. The paint-

ing is disorganized and reveals no craftsmanship. It is a horrendous picture.)

IDA: Oh, you're here! Hello! Put the canvas over there, Vincent. (VINCENT carries it to designated place.) It comes from Mrs. Bellinger—she says it won the prize at the Proletarian Art club seven years ago—it's going to be auctioned off. Isn't it wonderful of her? (MORTIMER, SANDY, and ERIC draw near to canvas.) It's a powerful thing, isn't it? I think, Vincent, you might bring the cocktails in now. (VINCENT bows and leaves the room. IDA holds her hand out to MORTIMER.) I'm glad you could come.

SANDY: That's a very beautiful frame.

ERIC: The man who painted that picture is certainly a colorist.

MORTIMER: I have made a special study of painting. This picture is a very interesting one. That was very generous of Mrs. Bellinger to send it.

IDA: Yes, it was thoughtful of her. (ALEC enters, but not far into the room—far enough to see the picture.)

ALEC: Oh—I beg your pardon. I guess I'm getting absent-minded. I meant to go to another room.

IDA: We were all just looking at a picture Mrs. Bellinger sent to be auctioned. (ALEC takes a step in direction of the picture. He doesn't speak. But he looks at the picture and then at each of them separately. Then he quietly exits. IDA looks at them all helplessly. With an appropriate gesture.) You see?

ERIC: Forget it, Ida.

IDA (*her face suddenly lighting up*): Isn't it wonderful about Eric? He's made me so happy. (IDA looks at MORTIMER and pantomimes—pointing to magazine she is carrying under her arm. To MISS STRASSER.) Wouldn't you like to wash up a bit before lunch, Miss Strasser?

MISS STRASSER (*rising*): I'm clean but I'll wash up. (MISS STRASSER exits.)

IDA: I'm afraid I'm very trying on poor dear Miss Strasser. (*She seems nervous and ill at ease.*) Eric, let me be alone with

Mortimer for a few seconds. Be an angel and take Sandy with you—show him your new chapter—but come right back.

ERIC (*rising to the occasion*): Oh, would you, Sandy?

SANDY (*rising reluctantly*): How long is it?

ERIC: Just a few pages. It reads fast. (*SANDY puts his arm around ERIC's shoulder and they exit.*)

IDA: I thought I couldn't see you alone without going to some lengths. (*She laughs. IDA takes letters from magazine. MORTIMER goes to her as she hands them to him.*)

MORTIMER: Thank you, Ida. You cleared the room beautifully. (*He looks at the mail quickly and puts it in his inside coat pocket.*)

IDA: You know, I've been so careful—I've almost been too careful. I feel delightfully conspiratorial!

MORTIMER (*showing disinterest*): You needn't. You're just doing a little favor for a worthy person.

IDA: Oh, but, Mortimer—do let me feel just a teeny weeny bit conspiratorial—It's such fun!

MORTIMER (*without reacting but changing the subject abruptly*): Mrs. Biemiller's doing very well, I understand—(*VINCENT enters with tray with cocktails, etc. IDA puts her hand to her mouth to say sssbbbbb.*)

IDA: Over there, Vincent. The other table is too cluttered. (*They wait for VINCENT to leave before speaking.*) Of course! I told you—once we were able to convince her—well, you see for yourself.

MORTIMER: You're looking marvelous, Ida. Flourishing.

IDA: Do I? I don't feel flourishing. I'm utterly exhausted.

MORTIMER: Perhaps you are taking on for yourself too many of the technical details of your Committee work.

IDA: Perhaps. But it isn't just that. It's everything.

MORTIMER: Ida, you're doing too much work. Why don't you transfer the duties of treasurer to some reliable person, and you can be treasurer in name then—and free to devote all of your time to the more constructive and broader features of the Committee's activities.

IDA: Do you know someone?

MORTIMER: I know just the person. He's a trained accountant, and very reliable. I shall arrange for you to meet him on Monday.

IDA: That mayn't be a bad idea, Mortimer—I have too many things on my mind—(*Her hand goes up to her eyes.*) The situation with Pauline is the same—(*She starts to whisper.*) There's no happiness for me while this continues. Can't you help me?

MORTIMER: I've already told you what to do. There is only one thing to do. *Break it off.*

IDA: That makes it worse. She told me today that if it weren't for her father she would leave this house. This is a house divided, Mortimer. You've no idea. (*MISS STRASSER enters and goes to her desk.*) Miss Strasser knows something of what I've gone through. (*She turns to MISS STRASSER.*) Don't you, dear?

MISS STRASSER: Yes, Mrs. Mowbray.

IDA: Don't sit there at that desk. Work is over for the moment. Sit in that comfortable armchair. (*MISS STRASSER reluctantly moves to chair and sits stiffly without relaxing a muscle.*)

MISS STRASSER: There's a crate of canned goods I forgot to tell you about. Should have been sent to Committee headquarters.

IDA: It doesn't matter. You can send it off this afternoon. Let's all have a drink. I'm famished. (*She goes to door and calls out loudly.*) Oh, Eric! Eric, come on down. (*IDA goes to table and shakes cocktail shaker.*)

MISS STRASSER: I never touch alcohol.

IDA: I forgot. That's right. I always forget that you don't drink—though I don't think a little drop could hurt you. (*She smiles at MISS STRASSER.*)

MORTIMER: None for me, either, Ida. Not in the middle of the day.

IDA (*shaking shaker*): Oh, you people without vices! I couldn't live without my little vices. Ah, life's too hard—life is very trying—one needs little pickups along the road—

(SANDY follows ERIC into room as IDA says her last sentence.)

SANDY: I need big ones! It's going to be awfully hard for me to leave—Mortimer—you've let me in for something.

MORTIMER (*very paternally*): Yes—but you mustn't overstay your welcome. (IDA is pouring the drinks into glasses as MRS. BIEMILLER walks in. MRS. BIEMILLER is a tall woman in her early forties. She is good looking, has a fine figure, but she is beginning to show the signs of fighting a losing battle with middle age. She is dressed very smartly. Her voice is rather rich and high pitched.)

IDA: You're just in time, Frances!

MRS. BIEMILLER: I've brought some things with me.

IDA: You know everyone, I think, except Mr. Sanford Warren, the journalist.

SANDY (*going to MRS. BIEMILLER*): It's a pleasure. (He shakes her hand.)

MRS. BIEMILLER: How do you do? I think I know of you. How are you, Mr. Mortimer?

MORTIMER (*bowing*): I'm so glad to see you again, Mrs. Biemiller. (A FOOTMAN wheels a baby carriage into the room.)

MRS. BIEMILLER (*turning to see him wheel it in*): See what I've brought you! You know I've been keeping this baby carriage ever since Mathilda was a tot. (FOOTMAN exits.) But now I feel as though sentimental feelings are useless. I said to myself this morning—*now there just might be* some poor sharecropper mother who could really use this—and how much better for her to have it than for it to remain in the cellar—coveted. It came to me—the idea—quite suddenly—just after I spoke with you, Ida, on the telephone. (She looks at it *endearingly* and then wheels it over from the center of the room. FOOTMAN returns with an enormous bundle of clothes, which he deposits in the middle of the room.) And here are some old clothes for the poor Chinese. They're not in bad condition and should be very useful. There's a little bed jacket I've had ever since I was on my honeymoon—but again sentiment—I cast it off. I need a cocktail badly. (SANDY brings her one as she sits in a chair.)

IDA: Eric, dear, just move those clothes for the Chinese a little to one side. (ERIC *moves the clothes and, as he does so, the FOOTMAN returns with a still larger bundle of old shoes.*)

MRS. BIEMILLER: And last but not least—wasn't that a wonderful idea of mine? Shoes! A vast variety! (*The cord breaks as the FOOTMAN is about to set them down, and the shoes fall all directions.*) Little ones, large ones, hunting shoes, hiking shoes, even hobo shoes. My husband calls his country shoes when he walks in the woods—hobo shoes. (*To FOOTMAN.*) Richard, that's all right. You better take care of that other matter. (FOOTMAN *exits.*)

IDA: Why, Frances! It looks like you've been collecting.

MORTIMER: That was exceedingly thoughtful, Mrs. Biemiller.

MRS. BIEMILLER: I didn't bother to pack them. You'll know more about that. I was delighted with the idea. (SANDY and ERIC *with their cocktails in their hands move over to examine collection of shoes.*) I promise you—there isn't one kind missing. (SANDY *picks up a man's shoe and starts to measure it to his own foot.*)

IDA: Now, Sandy—they're not for you but for the Chinese. (MISS STRASSER *comes forward and picks up a beautiful mule.*)

MISS STRASSER (*pensively*): They are in very good condition. I never had a pair of mules in my life.

MRS. BIEMILLER: Really. I suppose the Chinese women know about them. You know, I worked so hard getting these together—but I feel so much better since I've decided to do some work—I feel positively invigorated! (MORTIMER *smiles.* VINCENT *stands in the doorway.*)

VINCENT: Lunch is served, Mrs. Mowbray.

IDA: Good. Let's not delay. (*To VINCENT.*) Mr. Warren is expecting a guest. Will you show him to the dining room when he arrives? (VINCENT *nods and exits.* MORTIMER *goes to MRS. BIEMILLER and escorts her out while SANDY and ERIC and IDA follow.*) Come along, Miss Strasser. You're lunching with us.

MISS STRASSER: I'll be right in. (*IDA exits. MISS STRASSER finds the mate of the other mule and quickly hides them both in a drawer.*)

Curtain

ACT TWO, Scene 2

Same as Scene 1.

Six days later. Late afternoon.

BARBARA is lying face down, breathing heavily, the convulsive movements of one who is crying. She turns around on her back with her eyes closed. SANDY comes into the room— notices her, and tiptoes up to her. He watches her for a moment and then leans over and kisses her straight on the mouth.

BARBARA (*startled and sitting up at once*): Oh— (*BARBARA can't speak but sits there staring at him.*)

SANDY: Did I scare you? (*He laughs. BARBARA continues to stare at him but doesn't speak.*) Why are you staring at me, Toots?

BARBARA (*weakly and pathetically*): Sandy— (*She motions with her hand for him to sit by her.*) Sit here.

SANDY (*seeming at a loss—looks at her and sees that she has been crying*): What's the matter? You've been crying. (*He sits beside her. BARBARA nods her head.*) Why? What's the matter?

BARBARA: Everything.

SANDY (*putting his arms around her and kissing her tenderly*): Now, come on—you haven't got anything to cry about.

BARBARA (*looking at him after he kisses her*): I haven't told Eric that I saw you the other night.

SANDY: Why should you?

BARBARA: Oh, I don't know. I always tell him what I do and whom I see. He thinks I went out with some actors.

SANDY: Why bother? Do you tell him every time you have a cup of coffee with someone?

BARBARA: No—but I—I don't know—I just feel a little deceptive—and I don't like it. I don't believe in it.

SANDY (*looking at her rather bewilderedly*): You're a darling.

BARBARA: You know, you're not anything like I thought you were when you first arrived.

SANDY (*wondering what she is getting at*): What did you think?

BARBARA: Oh—that you were just one of those hard-boiled journalists. You're not really that way underneath, are you, Sandy?

SANDY: You have to be hard boiled in this business.

BARBARA: I don't think you're hard boiled any more.

SANDY: I want to know what you were crying about.

BARBARA (*starting to cry again*): If I could only tell you why I am crying . . .

SANDY (*kissing her again—this time very lightly on the forehead*): Come on. Get it off your chest.

BARBARA (*looking over to the door and then at STRASSER'S desk*): Do you think she'll be coming in on us?

SANDY: Strasser? Probably—it will be a surprise if she doesn't.

BARBARA: Life's unbearable for me. I'm so wretched . . . no one believes in me . . .

SANDY: I believe in you, Barbara.

BARBARA (*looking at him before speaking*): You do? Do you think—what did you really think of me in the play?

SANDY: I thought you were beautiful.

BARBARA: I don't mean how I looked—I mean—my acting.

SANDY: I thought you were swell.

BARBARA: Yes, but you saw me right after it opened. I was too nervous. I was much better after the first night. Nobody will believe it now that it's closed. Do you know something, Sandy? Eric was positively delighted because I didn't get mentioned by the critics.

SANDY: That was certainly unkind of him.

BARBARA: Wasn't it? (*She rises and starts to walk around the room.*) He says I stifle the poet in him—it's I who am stifled—it's I who am sensitive—not him—(*She looks at him for a second before speaking, as he lights a cigarette.*) Are you really leaving today?

SANDY: Yes. Isn't it about time?

BARBARA (*quietly*): You don't have to go, Sandy.

SANDY: Sure I do. I came to stay a few days—and I'm almost here three weeks.

BARBARA (*with some timidity*): What would you say if I asked you to stay?

SANDY (*as if putting off a child*): Now—now—now—

BARBARA: Please don't go, Sandy—stay just a little while longer.

SANDY: Sweetheart, I've already overstayed my welcome.

BARBARA: Did you mean what you said to me—when we had coffee together?

SANDY: Sure I meant it. (*She takes a chair opposite him—she can't control her tears and starts crying again. SANDY goes to her.*) Now, come on, tell me—what's bothering you?

BARBARA: It's Eric.

SANDY: What's he done?

BARBARA: Nobody knows how wretched my life is with Eric. I didn't want to live here anyway. Eric forced me to live here because he was squeamish about money. Just as though it didn't cost Papa as much for us to live here as elsewhere. I'm tired of luxury. I hate it! I'd have been willing to live in a garret with Eric. I don't dislike Eric. You know, Sandy, I'm really fond of him. But he's just like a child. I always have to mother him. (*SANDY watches her. He doesn't know what to say.*) Sandy, between you and me, what do you really think of Eric's writing?

SANDY: I guess it's all right for people who like that sort of thing. I'm a lowbrow.

BARBARA: Maybe I am, too. It's like him—brooding. You know—I was so young when I met him—I was swept off my

feet because he was a novelist and had a book published. I didn't know at the time nobody read his book.

SANDY (*playfully*): Could a journalist sweep you off your feet?

BARBARA (*as though her throat had closed*): Oh, Sandy, you have.

SANDY: Do you mean it?

BARBARA (*looking down*): I do. (*She starts to cry again. SANDY takes her by her hands and pulls her to her feet, embraces her, and kisses her. She pulls her head back—looks at him, and then nestles her head on his shoulder.*)

SANDY: It's just my luck—the day I'm leaving.

BARBARA: But that shouldn't make any difference to us—that won't make any difference, Sandy, will it?

SANDY (*chucking her under the chin*): No—not a bit.

BARBARA (*her mood suddenly changing*): Sandy, what are you doing tonight?

SANDY: Nothing that can stop me from seeing you.

BARBARA: Take me somewhere—to the Stadium—or to a movie—somewhere—I want to get away from everything here—

SANDY: Here I stand—I'm yours for the asking, Toots.

BARBARA: Oh, please don't call me Toots—sounds like something in a comic strip. (*ERIC comes in with a page of manuscript in his hand.*)

ERIC: Where's everyone?

BARBARA (*very sarcastically and raising her voice*): Mother's upstairs with a headache and Miss Strasser. Pauline's in her room studying—and I'm here, and Sandy's here.

ERIC: Can I read you another page I just finished on my novel? It's about a cafeteria strike.

BARBARA: Oh, Eric, please . . .

SANDY: Sure—I'll read it. (*He goes toward ERIC.*)

BARBARA: Sandy, you'll do nothing of the sort—(*To ERIC.*) You simply think no one has anything to do but read what you've written.

ERIC: What's wrong with that?

BARBARA: How do you know people are in the mood? That would never dawn on you, would it?

SANDY (*coming in immediately*): Come on—give it to me, Eric. I'll read it.

ERIC: Well, thanks— (ERIC *gives SANDY the typewritten sheet.*)

BARBARA: Please don't read it, Sandy. It's the principle of the thing. I want to cure him once and for all of this horrible conceit. (*To ERIC.*) What can one gather from a page? Eric, it's ridiculous.

SANDY (*starting to read*): It'll only take me a minute to read it. (ERIC *saunters around the room, waiting—keeping his eyes on SANDY. BARBARA, controlling her temper for the moment, studies ERIC.*)

BARBARA (*giving way to her impatience*): Eric, do you really think you understand me?

ERIC (*pointing toward SANDY*): Sh . . . sshh. . . .

BARBARA: Eric, I spoke to you.

ERIC: Please, Barbara, don't interrupt.

BARBARA: The way you act proves that you don't understand me.

SANDY: Barbara, I'm trying to read this.

BARBARA (*histrionically*): Eric, we're civilized people. We're all serious people. We all have our careers.

ERIC: Well, what about them?

BARBARA: I insist on a sane and open discussion. I think we should all put our cards on the table. (SANDY *moves over to ERIC and gives him back his page of manuscript.*)

SANDY: That was very good—I don't know what it leads up to—but it was very good. (SANDY *starts to exit.*)

BARBARA: Sandy, you have to stay. We're not going to hide anything from Eric.

ERIC (*blandly*): No, please don't.

BARBARA: Eric, Sandy and I are in love.

ERIC: Is that what you want to discuss?

BARBARA: There's no reason why this should be complicated

—why it shouldn't all be simple and above board. There's only one thing for us to do—quietly discuss it.

SANDY: Say, what is this?

BARBARA: Sandy, that's a very strange question for you to ask me.

ERIC: What do you want me to do?

BARBARA: Now, let's all sit down. Sandy, you sit over here. (*She points to a chair.*) Eric, you sit here. (*She points to another chair. SANDY reluctantly moves to designated chair, and ERIC, very bored, does the same.*) Now, there was a time—not so very long ago—when Mother was a girl—when a situation like this could break up a home.

SANDY: Oh, Barbara—

BARBARA: Please, Sandy—I'm handling this. (*She looks at ERIC.*) You look so blank, Eric. Do you understand what I'm trying to say?

ERIC: No.

BARBARA: I'm trying to tell you—that I see no reason why we shouldn't all be friends. I'm not running off with Sandy. What I'm concerned about right now is that there be perfect understanding.

SANDY: You're losing your head, Barbara.

BARBARA: How can you say that to me, Sandy? I've never deceived Eric, and I don't intend to now.

ERIC: How long has this been going on?

SANDY: Nothing's been going on.

BARBARA: It's been going on ever since Sandy's been here, but neither of us realized it.

SANDY: Toots, you've gone off on a romantic bender.

ERIC: I see. (*He looks from one to the other.*) What do you want me to do?

BARBARA: I want you to understand. That's all I'm asking you to do.

ERIC: Tell me now, precisely, what is it that I am to understand?

BARBARA: Oh—you're so obtuse.

SANDY (*extremely uncomfortable*): Perhaps I ought to leave you two alone.

BARBARA (*almost commanding him*): Don't you leave me. (To ERIC.) Why don't you say something? There isn't a glimmer of anything on your face.

ERIC: Isn't there?

BARBARA: No, there isn't. I'm not going to have a relationship that is clouded by dodges. I haven't thought of anyone else but you ever since I knew you—but you haven't the slightest need of me—not really—you are never concerned with my needs—my moods—

ERIC: You mean your histrionics?

BARBARA: I've done nothing but pamper you ever since we've been married. Nothing ever comes out in the open between us—(*She looks from SANDY to ERIC.*) I'm not suggesting that any of us should do anything drastic. We have a problem and we must be intelligent about it.

ERIC: Yes, *we* must be intelligent.

SANDY: Now—I—I think you two had better not—

BARBARA (*interrupting him*): I know precisely what I'm doing. We aren't characters in one of his novels—who never do anything about anything—but moon all the time and make fancy speeches.

SANDY: Listen, this is ridiculous.

BARBARA: I don't need you to tell me that, Sandy.

ERIC: I'm beginning to understand.

BARBARA: You do? You may understand but you haven't an ounce of appreciation for my honesty and forthrightness.

ERIC: Yes, I have—I really have—(*He looks at SANDY, who looks down and seems helpless.*) I've always had an appreciation for your honesty and forthrightness.

BARBARA: Don't you think you're reacting rather cynically?

ERIC: I was trying to act intelligently. (*MISS STRASSER walks in, very matter-of-fact in her manner. She goes straight to her desk. They feel her presence. SANDY is greatly relieved.*)

BARBARA (to ERIC): You seem very calm and composed . . . in the face of what I've just told you.

SANDY: Hello, Strasser. Did I get any mail?

MISS STRASSER: Not to my knowledge.

SANDY: No mail—huh? Well, that's that. I—ah—I think I'll go upstairs and finish packing. (*He looks at ERIC helplessly.*) I think this will all be settled amicably. (*He starts to exit.*)

BARBARA: Oh, no, it won't. (*SANDY exits. ERIC moves slowly over to the door and, just as he is about to exit, he turns around to BARBARA.*)

ERIC: Barbara, I don't misunderstand anything. (*ERIC exits. BARBARA is left sitting and looking blank. She suddenly notices MISS STRASSER.*)

BARBARA: How's my mother?

MISS STRASSER: All right. A slight headache is no cause for worry. (*MISS STRASSER doesn't look at BARBARA. She picks up some papers and exits. As she leaves, PAULINE comes into the room.*)

PAULINE (*sarcastically*): I assume all activities are over for the day.

BARBARA: Still carrying your feud around, aren't you? You don't need to take it out on me. I'm not part of it.

PAULINE: Aren't you?

BARBARA: No, I'm not. I haven't had anything to do with what's gone on between you and Mother and Mortimer and Phillip.

PAULINE: That's right—you haven't. You've just been cuddling up to Mortimer and going to political meetings, pretending to be interested—in order to wheedle a part.

BARBARA: That's not so. There's no reason why I should go around cutting Mortimer and everyone that comes to this house.

PAULINE: Really, Barbara, this sudden conversion of you and Eric is too much.

BARBARA: I've just had a terrible scene with Eric.

PAULINE: Aren't you always having scenes?

BARBARA: Not like this one. I might as well tell you—I'm not in love with Eric any more—and I just told him so—it's

really his doing. He's done everything to thwart me—has no sympathy for anything I want to do—and he's gone on taking me for granted—and I've let him. Well—I met someone who makes me feel altogether different about myself—and living—

PAULINE: Do I know him?

BARBARA: It's Sanford Warren.

PAULINE: You're not serious?

BARBARA: Oh, I'm not running off with him—I'm not doing anything rash or drastic. I simply told Eric. Sandy was present.

PAULINE: That must have been fun.

BARBARA: Oh, it's a difficult situation. I couldn't walk off and leave Eric if I wanted to—he hasn't a penny. Maybe this is just an infatuation—I don't know—I have to wait and see. I just feel upside down inside.

PAULINE: Frankly, I'm not interested in your emotional problems. I'm tired of them. I've come downstairs to meet Phillip. That's why I'm here. Not to commiserate with you.

BARBARA: Well, I hope he doesn't start a fight.

PAULINE: He's coming to see me—and I think he'll survive the atmosphere.

BARBARA: I'd love to be around if Mortimer should blow in.

PAULINE: It's revolting how you've all sidled up together. God! I can't wait until the time comes when I can leave this house.

BARBARA (*rising and walking toward door*): You've done your best to make it difficult for all of us. Who do you think you are? (BARBARA *exits*. MISS STRASSER *comes in and goes straight to her desk. She looks over at PAULINE with displeasure and then continues with her work. She then puts a sheet of paper in the typewriter and starts to type.*)

PAULINE: I'm not feeling very well, Miss Strasser. That noise disturbs me very much. Would you mind—

MISS STRASSER: I'm sorry. This is Mrs. Mowbray's office. (MISS STRASSER *goes on typing the letter.*)

PAULINE: You're just like a member of the family, aren't you, Miss Strasser?

MISS STRASSER: I'm a paid employee. I do not consider myself a member of the Mowbray family. (MISS STRASSER *continues typing*.)

PAULINE: You know more about what goes on around here than members of the family, don't you, Miss Strasser?

MISS STRASSER: I know only what it is necessary for me to know in the work I do for your mother. (MISS STRASSER *continues with her typing*.)

PAULINE (*slyly*): How much would you say—was it necessary for you to know?

MISS STRASSER: I do not understand you. (*Another pause. MISS STRASSER types again*.)

PAULINE (*like a cat playing with a mouse*): This is an interesting household, isn't it, Miss Strasser?

MISS STRASSER: I'm typing a letter that your mother wants me to get right off.

PAULINE: And one of the most interesting features of the Mowbray household is the telephone, isn't it, Miss Strasser?

MISS STRASSER (*suddenly stops typing, looks at PAULINE for a moment with an expressionless face, and then speaks*): I wouldn't know.

PAULINE (*very sarcastically*): You wouldn't. I see . . . (MISS STRASSER *goes on with her typing*.) You're not the only one who's aware of what goes on here. (MISS STRASSER *looks up for a second—and then goes on with her work*.) You know all about me, don't you, Miss Strasser?

MISS STRASSER: Please, Miss Mowbray, I'm busy.

PAULINE: I know a lot about you—more than you think I know.

MISS STRASSER: I have nothing to hide.

PAULINE: Really? You've been very careful, the way you've hidden your interest in my affairs.

MISS STRASSER: I have no interest in your affairs. I know nothing of them—except what I've heard discussed among members of your own family.

PAULINE (*very quietly and insinuatingly*): I just want you to know that I know. (MISS STRASSER *continues working, typing out an address on an envelope*. PAULINE goes to a table to get a magazine. PHILLIP BENTLEY appears in the doorway.)

PHILLIP: Hello!

PAULINE: Hello! You're late. (MISS STRASSER gets up to leave.) Miss Strasser, I want you to meet Mr. Bentley.

PHILLIP: How do you do.

MISS STRASSER: How do you do. (MISS STRASSER walks straight out of the room. PAULINE takes PHILLIP by the hand and leads him to the divan.)

PAULINE (*with much enjoyment*): I just let Miss Strasser know that I'm aware of her spying.

PHILLIP: What did she say?

PAULINE: Nothing. She pretended she didn't know what I was talking about.

PHILLIP (*stroking her hair*): What would you expect? Strasser is doing all these dirty little things for a nobler end.

PAULINE (*throwing her arms around him*): I'm so glad you're back. Did you have a nice trip—how did the lecture go?

PHILLIP: It seemed to be satisfactory. A number of my colleagues were in the audience and none of them agreed with me—they didn't agree with themselves. (*His eyes search the room.*) Wasn't I in this room before?

PAULINE: It's the same room—plus a deeper social consciousness. Will you have something to drink, Phillip?

PHILLIP: I think I might. (PAULINE rises and walks toward table where bottles are.) Let me make it. (He goes to table.) You want one?

PAULINE: Don't make mine too strong.

PHILLIP (*at table as he prepares drinks*): How's your mother? Is she still on the picket line?

PAULINE: Oh, no—Mother says it's too hot to picket.

PHILLIP: Do you think she'll come downstairs to greet me?

PAULINE (*laughing*): When I told her you were coming, she developed a headache.

PHILLIP: Where's the ice?

PAULINE: In that thermodorish-looking thing.

PHILLIP: You like much ice?

PAULINE: Uh-huh.

PHILLIP (*coming to her with drink*): Well, here you are.

PAULINE: Thank you.

PHILLIP: What shall we drink to?

PAULINE: To the future!

PHILLIP: To our future. (*They drink. He smiles wryly.*)

There's irony in any sane human being drinking to his future in a period like this—what?

PAULINE: Don't say that. I'm looking forward to the future. It means my moving out of here.

PHILLIP: I wouldn't argue with your mother if I were you, Pauline. You can't discuss these matters rationally.

PAULINE: I try to take that attitude—but—it's different when you're living under the same roof with someone. I hinted to Mother about Miss Strasser, but she wouldn't listen to me. She tells me I'm prejudiced.

PHILLIP: She'll change. (*He raises his glass.*) Penthouse Bolshevism will not go on forever. (*He drinks.*)

PAULINE: You know what we're going to do when we get married?

PHILLIP: What have you in store for me?

PAULINE: First, I'm going to build a fence around you. Then we're going to grow bulbs and alligator-pear seeds, have an aquarium.

PHILLIP (*interrupting*): Give me a kiss. You can grow all the alligator-pear seeds you want. But don't tell me you're marrying me in order to raise plants. (*He kisses her.*)

PAULINE (*looking at him, playfully disturbed*): I didn't realize what was the matter with you. You look awful. You got your hair cut.

PHILLIP: My barber, Tony, thinks he did an artistic job.

PAULINE: You're all face and no hair.

PHILLIP: My barber Tony explained to me that the trouble with the world is that Christmas only comes once a year. On

Christmas, everybody spends money, and business is good. So Tony says we ought to have Christmas four times a year.

PAULINE: I've picked your Christmas present out already.

PHILLIP: What? In June?

PAULINE: Oh, I wasn't looking or shopping. I just came upon it accidentally. I thought it was a wonderful idea.

PHILLIP: Am I supposed to ask what it is?

PAULINE: No, you're not. (*She walks away from him.*) I wouldn't tell you.

PHILLIP: That's all right. I'm not going to ask.

PAULINE: Well, don't you want to know?

PHILLIP: You just told me you didn't want to tell me. (*PHILLIP comes over to her, takes her by the hand, and leads her to divan.*)

PAULINE: You think I'm silly, don't you?

PHILLIP: No. You're being gay, and I like you to be gay.

PAULINE (*taking his hand, holding it in hers, and looking at him. She notices that he suddenly looks sad*): You look sad. All of a sudden your face changed. You look sad.

PHILLIP (*abstractedly*): Do I? I'm just tired.

PAULINE: Phillip, you can't carry the weight of the world on your shoulders. You're not Atlas.

PHILLIP: Sometimes it seems so damned hopeless to try and do anything about what's happening around one, Pauline. I think I picked the wrong profession.

PAULINE: What are you talking about?

PHILLIP (*ironically*): I should have been a jailer. Now—there's an occupation with a real future! In fact, it looks as if there's no occupation today with as good a future! (*ERIC appears in the doorway. He stands there looking very glum and morbid.*)

ERIC: Hello, Pauline.

PAULINE: Hello, Eric. Don't you feel well?

ERIC: What's the use of feeling well?

PAULINE: Now, what a way for you to talk. Eric, this is Phillip Bentley.

ERIC (*looking at PHILLIP and suddenly freezing*): How do you do.

PHILLIP: How do you do.

PAULINE: Eric, I haven't seen you look so melancholy in a long time. (ERIC *stands there, embarrassed, awkward, as if he does not quite know whether to stay or go.*) Why don't you sit down? (ERIC *sits reluctantly.*)

ERIC: Is Ida coming down?

PAULINE (*turning to PHILLIP*): Poor Eric isn't certain whether he should talk to you or not. (*She turns back to ERIC.*) Isn't that so, Eric?

ERIC: No, it isn't so. I'm an artist. I don't know anything about politics. I judge only by intuition. Why should I be afraid to speak to you? My intuition tells me which side is for humanity. I love humanity.

PAULINE: Are you implying that Phillip and I are enemies of humanity?

ERIC: No, no, you just don't understand. You don't understand the meaning of the work Ida's doing.

PAULINE: Eric, is it your intuition which gives you such insight and understanding of my ignorance?

ERIC: I don't want to talk about it. I have my own problems—What's the use of trying to do anything? What good is an artist in the world anyway? I'm just a lost soul.

PAULINE: But, Eric, you've always been a lost soul.

ERIC: Nobody has ever understood me. When I was a boy, I was as lonely as I am today. Even when I was in my mother's womb I wasn't understood.

PAULINE: Perhaps, Eric, you ought to be psychoanalyzed.

ERIC (*with supreme contempt*): Psychoanalysis—Christian science for the intellectuals! (IDA *enters very excitedly. She looks extremely harassed and reflects this in her voice.*)

IDA: I thought I heard voices. (*She notices PHILLIP.*) How do you do, Mr. Bentley.

PHILLIP: How do you do.

IDA (*turning to ERIC*): Eric, I want to have a talk with you. I've just spoken with Barbara. (*She turns to PHILLIP and PAUL-*

INE.) You'll excuse me. I'm sorry to have to be so abrupt. Come along, Eric. (*IDA exits, followed by ERIC, who walks out broodingly.*)

PAULINE: Mother has something closer to home than international affairs to upset her. Do you know what's happened—Barbara fancies she's in love with Sanford Warren.

PHILLIP: That explains Eric.

PAULINE: With this happening, it looks as if Mother is going to get more unity among the progressive forces than she bargained for. Eric's pathetic, isn't he? (*ALEC's head appears in the door. He peeks in furtively, sees PAULINE and PHILLIP, and then confidently steps into the room.*)

ALEC: Hello, children. How are you, Phillip? (*He shakes hands with PHILLIP.*) How's my little one?

PAULINE: I'm fine.

ALEC (*in a loud whisper*): Is everything all right? No untoward events? No Committees? (*He scrutinizes PHILLIP.*) You don't look as though you've been assaulted.

PAULINE: There seems to be a momentary moratorium.

PHILLIP: Very quiet. I haven't felt the pressure of events as yet.

ALEC: How long have you been here?

PHILLIP: Only a few minutes.

ALEC (*in a fearful tone*): I see. Is Miss Strasser here?

PAULINE: She is.

ALEC (*making a hopeless face*): Doesn't she believe in the eight-hour day? (*He turns to PHILLIP.*) I'm so glad I came home and found you. You know, Phillip, I've just about reached the point where I need an ideological bodyguard in my own home.

PAULINE: Father, I have some news for you.

ALEC: What is it?

PAULINE: It's Eric and Barbara. Barbara told Eric she wasn't in love with him any more—that she was in love with someone else—and Mother's all up in the air. She's having a session with Eric now.

ALEC: When did all this happen?

PAULINE: I don't know—it must have happened today.

ALEC: Is it serious?

PAULINE: I think it's all Barbara's doing.

ALEC: That's too bad. It makes me feel sorry for Eric. He's a very decent boy. (SANDY appears in the doorway. He looks troubled and indecisive.)

SANDY: Oh, hello, Mr. Mowbray.

ALEC: Hello, Mr. Warren. (SANDY takes a step or two into the room.)

SANDY: I was looking for Ida. She isn't upstairs.

PAULINE: She's with Eric. You'll probably find her in the dining room.

SANDY (standing there—not certain what to do or say and looking definitely unhappy): Uh-huh— (SANDY exits. PAULINE, PHILLIP, and ALEC look at one another.)

PAULINE (in a loud whisper): I forgot to tell you—it's Sandy.

ALEC: What do you mean?

PAULINE: Barbara told Eric she's in love with Sandy.

ALEC: No! (He turns to PHILLIP.) There's some of the fruits of Ida's labors for peace! (With real anger.) She's not taking up with that humbug journalist. What's the matter with the girl? Has she lost all sense? (He looks at PAULINE.) What has your mother done—stood by and watched all this? (He begins to walk about the room.) Pauline, I've arrived at the firm conviction that your Mother's a goddamned fool. She fills up the house with all these strange people. I go to the country for a week end and what do I find—Mortimer! I come home and nearly break my leg tripping over bundles of Chinese flags. It's not enough that they take over my house—and make my wife silly. Now they have to have my daughter! (SANDY appears again.)

SANDY (with considerable less spirit than in his former scenes): May I come in for a moment? I've come to say good-by.

PAULINE: You know Mr. Bentley.

SANDY: How do you do.

PHILLIP: How do you do.

SANDY: How are you, Pauline?

PAULINE: Fine.

SANDY: I think we all ought to have a drink. I really think the occasion warrants it—I'm taking my leave.

ALEC (*with mock politeness*): I'm sure we ought to have a drink on that, Mr. Warren. (ALEC goes to table and prepares drinks. As he measures.) I haven't seen you since I read your article on the legal profession, have I?

SANDY: What did you think of it?

ALEC: Irrelevant and immaterial.

SANDY: Why is it irrelevant and immaterial?

ALEC: I could condemn the legal profession on sounder grounds than you did. But, judging from your article, you seem to know all about the subject, so what would be the use in my discussing it with you.

SANDY: All right, if that's the way you feel about it. (ALEC goes to PAULINE with a drink, taking another in his hand! PHILLIP and SANDY go to the table and get their drinks.)

PAULINE: Thank you, Father.

SANDY: I'm sorry that you and I never got to know each other better, Mr. Mowbray.

ALEC: I'm sure that I shall always regret that as a wasted opportunity. Anyway, I'm glad that you got to know *other* members of the family better than you did me.

PAULINE: Are you leaving New York?

SANDY: Not right away. I'm going to be your neighbor, though. In fact, I'll be just around the corner at the Rexford Apartment Hotel.

ALEC: Oh—

PAULINE: How frequently might we expect visits from you?

SANDY: Oh, I don't know. But I'll drop by as often as I can. (MRS. BIEMILLER and MRS. ELLY FAIRCHILD breeze into the room with CHARLES BIEMILLER tagging after them. MRS. FAIRCHILD is short and dumpy. The fact that she is only plump, rather than fat, is a sign of her eternal vigilance against the tempta-

tions of the knife and fork. MR. BIEMILLER looks like the Forgotten Man—only prosperous.)

MRS. BIEMILLER (*breathlessly*): Oh, hello, everybody. We just took a chance. We've just got in from the country, and we thought we'd stop in. Is Ida here—(*She sees SANDY.*) Oh, bello, Sandy! I'm so glad you're here. I so much wanted you to meet Elly. Sandy, this is Elly Fairchild—she belongs to Ida's Committee. (*While MRS. BIEMILLER is talking, the others shake hands, etc. in greeting. Except PHILLIP.*)

SANDY (*going toward MRS. FAIRCHILD*): How do you do.

MRS. FAIRCHILD (*shaking his hand cordially*): It's just marvelous to meet you. I've always thought you were such a legendary figure. (*SANDY and MRS. FAIRCHILD stand talking.*)

ALEC: I want you all to meet Mr. Bentley. (*He points to each one as he mentions the name, and PHILLIP bows and says, "How do you do" to each one.*) Mrs. Biemiller, Mrs. Fairchild, Mr. Biemiller.

MRS. BIEMILLER (*to her husband*): Now, Charles, you look so uncomfortable. Sit in that chair. (*CHARLES obeys. MRS. BIEMILLER turns to the others.*) I've been working on him, but poor Charles is just a businessman without social consciousness.

CHARLES: How's the law business, Alec?

MRS. BIEMILLER (*before ALEC can answer*): Charles, you're not going to talk business this afternoon. I brought you here for another purpose.

ALEC: Will you all have something to drink?

MRS. BIEMILLER: Oh, yes, do give us something very stimulating. We need it. (*CHARLES nods affirmatively. ALEC goes to table to fix drinks. IDA rushes in.*)

IDA: My! What a delightful surprise! (*IDA goes around greeting everyone, kissing the women, shaking hands with CHARLES, and while she is doing this ELLY and SANDY talk.*)

MRS. FAIRCHILD: Mr. Warren, I've always wanted an opportunity to discuss the political situation with you. Is there any truth in the rumor that Hitler is interested in a woman? You know, I can't help but think that the political situation in

Europe would be *completely* altered if Hitler had an emotional experience.

SANDY: What about the poor woman? (MRS. FAIRCHILD *laughs*. ALEC *has made drinks and passes them around, with the help of the maid*, LOUISE, *who has just come in.*)

IDA: But why did you girls come to town in the heat? I wouldn't have, but for some special work I had to do.

MRS. BIEMILLER: Oh, it was just a lark, Ida. And Elly had some shopping to do. We're going back tonight.

IDA (*to LOUISE*): Louise, ask Miss Barbara and Mr. Lewis to come down. Tell them there are guests. (LOUISE *exits*. MRS. BIEMILLER *has gone over to where PHILLIP is sitting by PAULINE.*)

MRS. BIEMILLER: Mr. Bentley, are you a member of our Committee?

PHILLIP (*smiling*): I don't think so.

MRS. BIEMILLER: Oh, but you should join our Committee. You know what wonderful work we're doing—

IDA (*looking over at MRS. BIEMILLER*): Now, Frances, I wouldn't discuss politics with Mr. Bentley if I were you.

MRS. BIEMILLER: Don't be silly, Ida. (*She laughs and speaks over her shoulder back at IDA*): I've become a real activist. Do you know that I've converted I don't know how many people in South Norwalk. (*She turns back to PHILLIP.*) And I'm going to convert you.

PHILLIP (*amused*): To what?

MRS. BIEMILLER: I assume that you're not on the other side of the political fence, are you?

PHILLIP (*playfully*): Political fences are moved about so much these days that people often think they're on one side, and they wake up to discover that they're on the other.

MRS. BIEMILLER: Oh, but you're not on the side of the fence that's for Fascism?

PHILLIP (*deliberately casual*): Oh, no—I'm against all kinds of Fascism—red—black—brown—all hues of it. (ERIC and BARBARA *enter, followed by LOUISE. They ad lib greetings,*

LOUISE serves drinks. IDA keeps watching SANDY and BARBARA. ERIC and BARBARA separate.)

ALEC: Frances, be careful, you're talking to a philosopher.

MRS. BIEMILLER: That fact shouldn't exclude him from participating. (*To PHILLIP.*) It's all very well to teach philosophy—but you should participate more actively. Philosophy deals in abstractions—and we're not going to fight Fascism with abstractions.

PHILLIP (*very genially*): Well, what would you like me to do?

MRS. BIEMILLER: You can join our Committee! Hasn't Ida ever asked you to join it?

PHILLIP (*smiling*): No. (*PHILLIP glances at PAULINE, who smiles also. MRS. BIEMILLER turns to IDA.*)

MRS. BIEMILLER: Ida, why haven't you asked Mr. Bentley to join our Committee? We need philosophers! (*PHILLIP continues smiling.*)

IDA: Mr. Bentley is no doubt aware of the work to which our Committee is devoted.

MRS. BIEMILLER (*taking a card out of her pocketbook*): Now, here's an application card. I want you to sign it. (*She hands card to PHILLIP, who accepts it.*)

PHILLIP (*glancing at card*): What is the program of your Committee? What do you propose to do—concretely?

IDA: Frances, please! I don't think Mr. Bentley would be interested.

MRS. BIEMILLER (*turning to IDA*): Don't be ridiculous, Ida. This is the way I work—this is the way I win them over. (*She turns back to PHILLIP.*) One of our chief activities is boycotting German and Japanese goods. Now, wouldn't you say that *that's* an important way of fighting Fascism?

PHILLIP (*smiling*): I'm not against it, but I don't take it very seriously as a means of stopping Hitler.

MRS. BIEMILLER: Why, you sound like a doubting Thomas. We can't achieve anything if we haven't any confidence. (*She turns to IDA.*) Ida, this young man should have a session with Mr. Mortimer.

PAULINE: Mr. Mortimer has already misrepresented Mr. Bentley's character to my mother. (*They all look at PAULINE—surprised.*)

IDA: Pauline!

PAULINE: It's the truth!

IDA: Mortimer did not misrepresent Mr. Bentley. He only warned us about Mr. Bentley's political convictions. (MRS. BIE-MILLER *edges away from PHILLIP.*)

PAULINE: Mortimer seems to have a monopoly on political convictions.

IDA (*embarrassed*): Of course, Pauline, you have had so much more experience and given so much more time and attention, and you've sacrificed so much more for this than Mr. Mortimer.

PAULINE: What is Mr. Mortimer sacrificing?

ERIC (*with a slight whine in his voice*): Can't we all get together? Here we are, with the Fascist bayonets pointing at us, and with bombs falling on our heads, and what are we doing! Wasting our ammunition on each other.

MRS. FAIRCHILD: Perhaps Mr. Warren could add *his* enlightening voice to this situation.

SANDY: I agree with Eric. This is no time for theories. But professors can't understand—they are so used to talking—that they can't act.

PHILLIP: There are many actions these days that many people like you are going to regret.

SANDY: Professor Bentley, I have nothing to regret.

PHILLIP: What about those articles you wrote from Spain?

SANDY: Well, what about them?

PHILLIP (*with considerable feeling*): My brother was one of the boys who believed what men like you wrote. He went to Spain. He was killed. Many other boys were killed, ruined for life. You were there. You knew what was happening. Why didn't you tell the truth?

SANDY: You're talking through your ear. You don't know anything about it.

MRS. FAIRCHILD: Do you mean to tell us that there is something wrong with the articles of our Sanford Warren?

SANDY: You can't fight a war without casualties.

PHILLIP: That's a lying way of dodging responsibility.

SANDY: You can't understand history and politics unless you take a realistic attitude, Professor.

PHILLIP: I see! My brother went to Spain to fight for a cause—to fight for freedom. It ended up that he was shot for a party line. And you explain it to me with a cheap platitude.

SANDY: You talk like an armchair general.

PHILLIP (*with bitter sarcasm*): That's right. And you're one of the heroes of the Spanish War. Sanford Warren, the journalist, who went to Spain and justified the murder of a revolution by the O.G.P.U.

MR. BIEMILLER: What does all this mean, Alec?

MRS. BIEMILLER: Charles, you keep still. How many times have I told you that no man with any humility will go swimming out of his intellectual depths.

MRS. FAIRCHILD: Ida, I honestly think that this young man would like to see Hitler over here.

SANDY: Hitler well might be over here but for the Soviet Union. There would be no hope in the world if we didn't know that there is one place where the Fascist murderers will never have their way. *That's* what I wrote in my last Spanish article. And *that's* what Bentley can't take.

PHILLIP: I can't *take it* because it's a lie—what are you going to write when there is a *rapprochement* between Stalin and Hitler? (MRS. BIEMILLER and MRS. FAIRCHILD *laugh*.)

MRS. FAIRCHILD (*laughing again*): Frances, isn't it ridiculous?

MRS. BIEMILLER (*to PHILLIP*): Where do you get such strange ideas?

MRS. FAIRCHILD: Oh, I do wish Mr. Mortimer were here. You would never say such things in his presence.

IDA: Mr. Bentley, I do not intend to have any more reactionary Fascist-Trotskyite talk in my home.

PAULINE: Phillip is my guest.

IDA (*making a move forward as though to execute her idea*): All right, my guests will leave. (*At this moment MORTIMER enters. As usual, he makes a bee line to IDA.*)

MORTIMER: My dear Ida, I'm so glad to find you in. I just dropped in for a moment. (*He looks around.*) And Mrs. Fairchild! Why, how do you do? I'm so glad to see you. And Mrs. Biemiller! Why, such a pleasure to walk in and see so many charming people. Hello, Eric. Hello, Barbara. Hello, Pauline.

IDA: Oh, Mortimer, I'm so glad that you came. (*She speaks as though announcing a sinister presence.*) Mortimer, Mr. Bentley is here.

MORTIMER (*turning around. And very coldly*): How do you do.

ALEC: Mortimer, I'm so glad to see you at this time.

MORTIMER (*turning and taking a step toward ALEC*): Why, Alec, it is a pleasure to see you. How have you been—

ALEC (*dryly interrupting him*): The ladies have just been clamoring for your presence. It seems they want you to tell Mr. Bentley what they think.

PAULINE (*cutting in immediately—sarcastically*): Mortimer, I'm awfully glad that you and Phillip have a chance to meet. I wanted him to meet you much sooner.

MRS. FAIRCHILD: Why, Mortimer, this young man was just telling us that Russia and Germany were going to get together. (*She laughs.*) Can you imagine it?

SANDY: Yes, Mortimer. We've been hearing Hans Christian Andersen fairy tales.

MORTIMER (*ignoring PHILLIP and addressing himself mainly to IDA*): I have just written an article in which I handle these lying rumors. I have it here with me. (*He pulls a crumpled newspaper from his pocket.*)

MRS. FAIRCHILD (*eagerly*): Tell us what you wrote, Mortimer.

MORTIMER (*with the paper ready*): Here it is. (*With humility, he looks from one of the ladies to the other.*) Would you like to hear my conclusion on this subject? (*They ad lib that they would.*) If you will then pardon me for reading my own

article, here is my conclusion. (He waits for a short pause. He reads.) "The lying gossip which whispers that the Soviet Union will sign a treaty of understanding with Nazi Germany is merely a vile poison spread by the enemies of Peace and Democracy: the Appeasement Mongers, the Munich-men of Fascism.

"Progressives and peace lovers all over the world know in their hearts that they can have faith in the Soviet Union to stop the bestial march of Nazism." (He looks up with pleasure. MRS. BIEMILLER, MRS. FAIRCHILD, IDA, SANDY, and BARBARA all look gratified and vindicated. ERIC looks puzzled. MRS. BIEMILLER takes the paper from MORTIMER and goes to PHILLIP with it.)

MRS. BIEMILLER (challengingly): Read that!

MORTIMER (suddenly apprehensive and protesting as PHILLIP takes the paper): Give me my paper back.

PHILLIP (opening paper and ignoring MORTIMER. He speaks sneeringly): Ah, *The Daily Proletariat*. The People's Champion of Liberty, Progress, Peace, and Prosperity. (He turns a page.)

MORTIMER: Sneering remarks about the most progressive paper in America is no answer. (PHILLIP continues reading paper.)

ALEC: And just think of it. I never read one copy of *The Daily Proletariat*. Look at all the progressive thought I missed.

IDA: It would have done you no harm.

PHILLIP (looking up from his paper, coolly at MORTIMER): I see another article of yours on the New York intellectuals. I see you mention me. I see that: "A certain incompetent young teacher of philosophy named Phillip Bentley, a disciple of John Dewey, is another of these rats. In classes at Columbia University, he spews forth poison to contaminate the minds of progressive students. Progressive students and members of the faculty will know what to do with this obnoxious nobody. They will boycott him and demand his dismissal. Fascism cannot be preached by such men in our free universities." (There is complete tension and silence in the room.)

PAULINE: That's a lie. (*To MORTIMER.*) Why did you write that?

MORTIMER: I don't think that this is the time or the place to discuss these questions.

ALEC: Why not?

PHILLIP (*rising, and taking a few steps toward MORTIMER, faces him*): I'll tell you why you wrote this article.

MORTIMER (*taking a step back*): I have no interest. Rational discourse with a Fascist is impossible.

PHILLIP: Well, I'm going to tell you anyway. You wrote these character assassinations and slanders because I wouldn't become another stooge and dupe for you and your comrades, the way these women have. You wrote that article because I fought *Communitistic* efforts to control and wreck my union. You wrote that article because you could not tell me what to say. (*Very slowly.*) *You know I'm not a Fascist.*

MORTIMER: Your record is known.

PHILLIP: You mean that I am known as somebody who doesn't play ball. You mean that I have told my classes in ethics about your methods. That's what you mean.

IDA: Mr. Bentley, I must ask you not to indulge in personalities in my home.

SANDY (*cutting in as PHILLIP resumes speaking*): You're just one of these fellows who won't march in the ranks. You won't fight Fascism unless you can be general.

MRS. FAIRCHILD (*shrilly*): What are you doing about fighting Fascism?

MRS. BIEMILLER (*simultaneously with MRS. FAIRCHILD and rather hysterically*): You're doing nothing but talking.

IDA: The present is no time for individualism.

PHILLIP (*ignoring the women and looking at SANDY*): I haven't reached the point where I'm fighting Fascism by taking bows in a drawing room.

SANDY: Well, what are you doing? What are you defending?

PHILLIP (*looking at SANDY and then at MORTIMER*): I am defending the cause which you betrayed. I am defending the banner which you and your kind have dragged through the

mud. For a hundred years, men have given their liberty, their blood, their lives, fighting for an ideal which would make men free. Today that cause seems like a lost cause. Whether it be lost or not, defending it is the moral content of my life. (*The women look at MORTIMER for an answer.*)

MORTIMER: Words! Words! Cynical demagoguery!

MR. BIEMILLER (*rising and looking worried*): Frances, I just remembered.

MRS. BIEMILLER (*with impatience*): What, Charles?

MR. BIEMILLER: I parked the car in front of a fire plug.

Curtain

ACT THREE, Scene 1

Same as Scene 1.

Several weeks later: August 21, 1939. Evening—after dinner. Curtain rises on empty stage. BARBARA enters rapidly but furtively. She rushes to table where telephone is, is about to pick it up and decides to run over to the door to make certain no one will interrupt her. She rushes back to telephone. Her mood is an hysterical one.

BARBARA (*dialing. She looks over at door and then back at phone*): Hello! Mr. Warren—so you *are* answering the telephone . . . that isn't true . . . you told me you'd be there this afternoon . . . I called five times—what? . . . You *knew* I'd call . . . I'm not hysterical . . . No, I'm not . . . listen, Sandy—all I want to say is this—will you let me speak—Well, you won't give me a chance to tell you . . . You're placing me in a horrible position . . . Yes, you are . . . Your conduct is simply a manifestation of cowardice . . . what have you to be afraid of . . . I'm the one you should be concerned about . . . not you—I'm not childish—I think the way you're dodging me is disgraceful . . . but you *know* the situation—Well . . . but you've got to—please—let me meet you at the radio station—don't be so abrupt—this is im-

portant, too—just as important as your radio talk . . . Well, I'm sorry—but—(SANDY *has hung up.*) Sandy—Sandy—(She *hangs up. She gets operator.*) Operator, I've been disconnected. Will you try and get me Regent 4-3281—(She *looks over at door. Her impatience is manifest. She looks over at door again and hears voice.*) All right, operator. Thank you very much. I guess the party is not in. (She *sits blankly and looks very pained.* IDA *enters, followed by ALEC. She seems very upset and her voice is harsh.*)

IDA (as she enters): Please, Alec. I don't want to continue this. (She *sees BARBARA. BARBARA doesn't move. ALEC stands directly back of IDA with his hands in his pockets.*) What's the matter, Barbara?

BARBARA (rising abruptly and speaking hysterically, she rushes from the room): Nothing's the matter. (BARBARA *exits.*)

ALEC: That's your doing.

IDA (turning on him): That's vile of you to say that. How am I responsible for any emotional attachment Barbara may have?

ALEC (sarcastically): Yes, but is this purely an emotional attraction? Isn't it an ideological affinity?

IDA: Are you going to go through the rest of your life letting your prejudices distort everything?

ALEC: I can assure you that I wouldn't be getting any bargain if I were to exchange my prejudices for yours.

IDA: Your prejudices enable you to ridicule everything I do.

ALEC: Because everything you do is ridiculous.

IDA: It gives you great satisfaction to see me playing a ridiculous role, doesn't it?

ALEC: Yes—it gives me great satisfaction—I derive tremendous satisfaction from the spectacle of what's happening to my home. It would be absurd for me not to feel a superior satisfaction in my daughter's part in your ennobling work—and now, tomorrow Pauline's getting married—so here we are—you and I—in this enormous house—with the prospect of inhabiting it—alone.

IDA: It's a pleasurable prospect for me, also. We don't have to share it alone—at least I don't have to share it with you. Ever since I became interested in my present activities—I've seen it grow—day by day—your steady hatred of my occupations. You've tried your best to take all the heart out of me—but you haven't succeeded. When my spirit was most buoyant—you've tried to run it to earth. I'm ashamed of your hatred for everything I stand for—your blame for every mishap that has occurred . . .

ALEC: That's right. The martyr has always been a becoming role for you. But your words mean nothing, Ida. I've known you too many years.

IDA: You have never known me. Not really.

ALEC: Perhaps I haven't. Please allow me the privilege of thinking I have. The *you* I thought I knew—can I put it that way?

IDA: How is it that every time I became interested in a subject or a cause—you would openly jest about it—but underneath, what you most resented were my changing attitudes.

ALEC: I've never ceased to marvel at the fact that while you were able to recognize a jest—you were never able to grasp its underlying meaning. (*His tone changes and he becomes angry.*) At the time when you might have been able to do something about Barbara and Eric—you were too goddamn busy listening to speeches, going to meetings, and trying to find Mortimer in order to know what the hell was going to happen tomorrow morning.

IDA: You talk like a simpleton—as if I could have prevented it.

ALEC: Who invited Sanford Warren here in the first place?

IDA: Am I clairvoyant about everything? What good has it done me to try preventing Pauline from falling in love with that creature—Oh, you're hard and so utterly intolerant—so lacking in the fundamentals of understanding. We agree on nothing any more. (*ALEC picks up a magazine. IDA studies him for a moment.*) Is this going to be our life—wrangling together? That seems to be the only thing we have in common.

(ALEC looks up but doesn't speak.) What solution do you offer?

ALEC: I've never been any good at finding solutions for any of your problems, Ida.

IDA: Am I to continue living in a house—with a man who is utterly alien to me—in every way?

ALEC: If that's what I've become—there isn't much I can do about it.

IDA: Well, I won't. This isn't the nineteenth century. I'm not going to sacrifice my ideals and live in a vacuum, as you would have me. I'm not going to have my spirit warped nor my energies hampered for a social life devoid of meaning. I've been more or less blind to the outside world for years—thanks to you, Alec Mowbray—and for me to sit back and do nothing is out of the question. You are not going to turn me into a stagnant female.

ALEC: You know, Ida, you've always confused activity with meaning—or should I say—*significance*. They very frequently have nothing in common. (*He pauses.*) And I see no reason why I should continue my financial help in that direction.

IDA: If you think you can deter me in that way—you are very greatly mistaken—and I repeat—you do not know me, Alec Mowbray. (*She rises and stands imperiously looking at him.*) I'm a changed woman—and maybe I do not know you—any more. (ALEC looks up at her, trying to restrain a smile.) Oh—what insolence is written on your face. What self-righteousness. I don't believe this house, with all its rooms, is large enough for us any more. (IDA moves to leave the room as PAULINE enters. IDA sweeps out of the room.)

PAULINE: Anything happen?

ALEC (*without looking at her*): Pauline, there's one problem that's never going to be solved, in this world or the next—and that's the problem of the goddamn fool. (*He looks up at her.*) You look beautiful— (PAULINE laughs softly.) And happy.

PAULINE: I don't know how I look—but I know how I feel.

I feel very strange. I feel both singularly happy and sad—at the same time. And maybe a little frightened.

ALEC: Oh, don't be silly. You're marrying a fine boy. I've grown very fond of him. And he has a promising career ahead of him.

PAULINE: Father, I'd feel dreadful if you didn't like him.

ALEC (*studying her for a moment and then motioning to a chair*): Sit down, Pauline. (PAULINE *sits near him. He pauses a moment.*) Now, I don't want to interfere or tell Phillip what to think or do. You know that. But there is something I wanted to mention to you. But then, I guess it's none of my business. I'm an old fellow and I'm set in my ways, and God knows that my generation has done everything that it could to make a mess of the world. I guess I haven't got any right to tell young people what to do.

PAULINE: Father darling, you say anything you want.

ALEC: I was just thinking about Phillip. Phillip is an idealist. That time he was here and spoke to everybody, I could see that. And he's smart, damned smart. But I've thought a lot about some of the things he said. You know, he's quite radical. He's more radical than I realized. Now, after all, Phillip has an academic career, and a bright one. He has a future, and he can do fine work. I was thinking—that if he concentrated more on his career and less on his radicalism, he'd be better off—both of you would. With some of those ideas of his, he's liable to get into a lot of trouble.

PAULINE: Father, you don't mean that as advice, do you?

ALEC: No—but I'd hate to see him throw himself away. Those ideas of his are going to be an obstacle to his getting on. We all get to the point where we see that you really can't do much, and might as well hoe your own garden.

PAULINE: Father, I'm not going to try to change you—now, don't you try to change Phillip or me. (*She smiles tenderly.*) You won't be able to, anyway. (*Goes to him, kisses him, and sits on the arm of his chair.*) You know what Phillip says about Mother and her friends?

ALEC: What?

PAULINE: He says that this penthouse Bolshevism is just a fad, and that as soon as they wake up and find out that they're playing with fire—they'll all run like mad.

ALEC: Yes, but Phillip doesn't know your mother as I do. She has to drink up the whole Atlantic Ocean before she knows that it's salty.

PAULINE (*stroking his hair*): Father, it's really all your fault. You never really brought Mother up.

ALEC: Pauline, your mother's province of activity is the entire human race. She's bringing up humanity. How could I have brought her up?

PAULINE: But, Father, I mean it, seriously.

ALEC: Well, so am I serious. Whether you're right or wrong, it's too late now. (*He pauses.*) Your mother is well past her formative years. (*ERIC strolls in very forlornly.*)

ERIC (*noticing them and speaking lifelessly*): Hello. Where's Barbara?

ALEC: I don't know, Eric.

PAULINE: She went out, but I don't know where.

ALEC: Eric, I wish that I could do something.

PAULINE: Oh, Barbara is bound to come to her senses.

ERIC (*dropping into a chair*): I suppose I needed this to happen to me. It's good for me. It'll harden me, and I need to be hardened. I guess I shouldn't have argued with her about her stage career. Even if she can't act, it wasn't doing me any harm. I wasn't making a fool out of myself on the stage. She was. But anyway, I need this. I need to suffer. I need to go down in the fires. De Maupassant, Dostoevski, all great writers went down in the fires. If I want to write, I have to do it, too. I'm going to write a novel now, and then I'll show Barbara.

PAULINE: Eric, maybe you're taking Barbara too seriously.

ERIC: No, I'm not. She told me tonight that she was leaving me. She said it was final.

ALEC: What else did she say? What does she intend to do?

ERIC: She leaves me suspended in the air. I don't know anything.

ALEC: Well, Eric, for God's sake, don't you leave. It looks

like there's going to be an exodus from this house. Pauline's going away tomorrow to get married. Ida just said she's going to go. Barbara's saying she's going. Eric, you'll have to stay and be a bachelor with me.

PAULINE: Father, Mother won't really leave.

ERIC: I don't know where Barbara's going. Sandy's leaving town next week for a lecture tour.

ALEC: What does that mean?

ERIC: I don't know. She won't be specific. She just acts mysterious, and then she gets hysterical. She says it's my fault. I don't know what I did. She told me that I was a poet and that she needed a man of action.

ALEC: Does she call that sponging journalist—a man of action? Who the devil does she think he is—Stalin or Floyd Gibbons?

ERIC (*putting his hand to his forehead and rubbing his hand through his hair*): Maybe we should have had a baby.

ALEC: Yes, I think it would have been a good idea, Eric. And do you know, I'd like Ida to come to the realization that she's old enough to be a grandmother.

ERIC: Well, Pauline, this is your last night at home.

ALEC (*rather mordantly*): Yes, it is.

PAULINE (*getting up and beginning to walk*): For the first time since I decided to get married, I have such a feeling of guilt—leaving this house in its present state.

ALEC: You needn't, Pauline. There's nothing you could do about it. (*He thinks of something suddenly.*) Say, do you know a Mr. Smith?

PAULINE: What Mr. Smith?

ERIC: Smith. I don't know anybody named Smith.

ALEC: L. M. Smith, that's the name. I usually leave the house in a hurry without looking at the mail. But these last two mornings, for some reason or other, I don't know—I noticed it. Some mail is coming here care of Ida for L. M. Smith. Who is he? Don't either of you know him?

PAULINE: I don't know. I never pay any attention to Mother's mail.

ALEC: I suppose he must be somebody on Ida's Committee. Say—if his mail is coming here, maybe he's on the way to stay with us. (*His mood changes suddenly.*) Well, maybe he won't now.

PAULINE: I think Mother is a bit chastened in that respect.

ALEC: You do? I can't imagine the thing, event, or person, that could chasten your mother. Did that meeting between Phillip and Mortimer have any effect on her, or any of her dumb friends? It didn't make a dent. Ida's been worse ever since.

PAULINE: But you know—historic events are taking place. She's very upset today over the announcement of the Russo-German trade pact.

ALEC: You mean it promises to interfere with her boycott work against the Germans? (*He laughs.*)

ERIC: It's true. She is upset. She's been trying to get Mortimer on the telephone all day to come up and explain it to her. (ALEC *laughs again—this time more loudly.*)

ALEC: Is he coming up? (*His laughter has subsided.*) Well, it won't make any difference. Mortimer will be able to settle all questions of doubt on any subject under the sun. Remarkable person, isn't he?

ERIC: I'm all mixed up about everything. (*He looks up rather wistfully.*) We were all so peaceful and happy a few months ago.

PAULINE (*in a spontaneous burst*): Maybe we can all go to Paris next summer!

ALEC: What? With a new political crisis going on every week?

PAULINE: Oh—but *nobody wants war*! I don't believe there will be one. I think we're going to have a series of crises for years and years and finally everyone will be so exhausted with crises—*Why* do you think all this crises business continues if not to postpone the final day of conflagration? We'll all be able to go to Paris next summer!

ALEC: Pauline, none of us knows what goes on behind the

scenes. I wouldn't trust all the diplomats of Europe in an empty cellar.

PAULINE: I haven't walked through the Tuileries with you since I was a little girl. I remember how one morning you took me in the Luxembourg gardens and bought me a little hoop and let me play with the little French children. We have no gardens like those, have we?

ALEC (*nostalgically*): No, we haven't—and I don't believe any country in the world has. One thing I've always been able to understand—and that is French patriotism. Why, god-damn it—with a garden of a country like France—if one were a Frenchman—how could he not be a patriot?

ERIC: I'm against all kinds of patriotism. Look what it's done. It's brought about the situation we have in the world today.

PAULINE: Well, we'll see. It would give me something to hope for. (*With sudden spontaneity again.*) If there isn't a war—say you will go with me—with us.

ALEC: If there isn't—I'll go. (PAULINE *jumps up and kisses him.*)

ERIC: Barbara and I used to talk about going to France. She said I needed to go because it would make me less insular. I *would* like to sit in the cafés, though. She never understood me. Take a man like Flaubert. He deliberately stayed away from Paris because the life was too diverting and he found he couldn't write there so well. So he stayed in his little village of Croisset and wrote *Madame Bovary*. I understand why he did. But I should like to visit France for a few months.

ALEC: I've learned one thing in life, my children—and that's not to count on anything. However, you must go ahead and plan and hope and work.

PAULINE: You've always done those things, Father?

ALEC: That's right. I just do them differently now. (IDA *comes into the room, tense and cold.*)

IDA: Barbara gone?

ALEC: Pauline says she left a little while ago.

IDA (*standing there a moment, wondering what to say*): I see. You don't know where she went?

ERIC (*melancholy*): She didn't even say good-by to me.

IDA: Are you all packed, Pauline?

PAULINE: Yes, Mother.

IDA: I'm told you're going to Virginia. Isn't that rather unnecessarily far away—just to get married?

PAULINE: It's not really so far. We have to go outside the state and we both thought Richmond such a lovely old town.

IDA: I see.

PAULINE: It doesn't really make any difference. It was just a whimsical idea.

IDA: I suppose it would be presuming of me to expect to be informed about your marriage plans.

PAULINE: Mother, I haven't assumed you would be anything but displeased with whatever I decided to do.

IDA: Should that prevent you from discussing certain things with me?

ALEC: Oh, Ida, you've done your best to prevent Pauline from taking you into her confidence.

IDA: I see. This is merely a matter of confidence. The fact that I am your mother matters not at all. Even if I do disprove—that has nothing to do with it. I might be told a few things. I walk into this room and sense a secret feeling of hostility. My own daughter is being married—I'm not told when or where. I have to ask. I'm not told how long you expect to be away—I'm told nothing.

PAULINE: Mother, I don't understand you.

IDA: I'm afraid you don't. But that's all right. Leave me out of it. I've learned to stand alone. (ALEC, PAULINE, and ERIC sit looking at one another.) What I came downstairs for, and specifically into this room, was for another purpose. This happens to be the only room in the house in which there is a radio—except in the servants' quarters. I came to listen to a broadcast—also I've asked Mortimer to come over for a few minutes to discuss the Russo-German trade pact with me.

ERIC: Can't I stay and listen to what Mortimer has to say?

IDA: Why, yes, Eric, you can stay.

ALEC: I think that's something we'd all like to hear explained.

IDA: Of course, you're not in the least interested in any of Mortimer's explanations.

ALEC: Well, I would be in this one. (*The bell downstairs is heard ringing.*)

IDA: That must be Mortimer. (*They wait, and there is an awkward pause. IDA has moved over to the door to welcome her guest. MORTIMER enters. He looks a little more worn in this scene than he has in any other.*) Hello, Mortimer, it was nice of you to come.

MORTIMER: Hello, Ida. (*He shakes hands with IDA warmly. He comes into the room, and everyone ad libs hello to MORTIMER except PAULINE. He ad libs hello to them and sits down.*)

IDA: Can I get you something to drink?

MORTIMER: No, thank you. I don't think I would care for anything tonight.

IDA (*standing and watching him anxiously*): Do you want to wait and catch your breath?

MORTIMER: I'm all right. I am just fatigued. I had such a difficult day.

IDA (*unable to restrain her anxiety another moment*): Mortimer, now, just what does it mean—this trade pact between Germany and the Soviet Union? I've been puzzled ever since I read about it in this morning's paper.

MORTIMER (*with his usual suavity—plus a slight smile of tolerance*): A bagatelle. A bagatelle, Ida, that's all it is.

ALEC: You mean to say this trade agreement is meaningless?

MORTIMER (*the complete minister*): This trade pact is of no political significance whatever. The Soviet Union will continue in her fight against Hitler and all aggression.

IDA: I was sure it was no cause for worry, but I just wanted to be reassured.

MORTIMER: Of course, Ida, the Tory press always makes mountains out of molehills. *They* are the ones who always mislead gullible minds. (*IDA looks at her watch.*)

IDA: I was forgetting. I want to catch Sanford Warren's

broadcast—much as I dislike the idea of listening to that young man—I'm interested in what he has to say tonight. We'll discuss this in a moment. (*IDA goes to radio and dials in the station. Everyone sits listening. The voice of SANFORD WARREN is heard.*)

SANDY'S VOICE (*with much confidence and force*): To conclude, ladies and gentlemen, *there can be no peace in the world until Adolf Hitler is stopped*. Yesterday, it was Austria and Czechoslovakia. Today, it threatens to be Poland, unless effective action is taken immediately. *It is almost too late*. We stand at the last hour, and the entire future of mankind trembles in the balance. The Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis *must be smashed*. The peace-loving and democratic nations of the world, including the Soviet Union and America, *must band together to save the human race*. I thank you.

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE (*breaking in immediately before anyone in the room has an opportunity to speak. He talks in a very tense and excited voice*): ATTENTION PLEASE! I bring you the latest radio press bulletin, which has just come into our studio. BERLIN, GERMANY, AUGUST 21ST. Immediately following the Russo-German Trade Pact, it was officially announced tonight that the Soviet Union and Germany have agreed to sign a NON-AGGRESSION PACT. (*With greater excitement in his voice.*) Herr Von Ribbentrop is flying to Moscow to confer with Joseph Stalin and Premier Molotov. High Nazi sources expressed jubilation and declared that this development constitutes a *crushing diplomatic defeat for the Western Democracies*. The consequences of this pact *are incalculable*, and it is predicted that within a week *the entire European situation will be radically changed*.

Another bulletin! LONDON, ENGLAND. Opinion in the British Capitol tonight is stunned by the sudden dramatic announcement of the RUSSO-GERMAN *rapprochement*.

Please keep tuned to this station for further bulletins.

ANOTHER VOICE ON RADIO: This is station W-A-C-K. You have just heard Sanford Warren, the journalist, deliver a . . . (*IDA goes to radio and turns it off before the announcement*

is completed. Everyone in the room is dazed and stunned for a moment. All heads almost simultaneously turn to MORTIMER and wait. MORTIMER looks at them and for one moment seems to be at a loss.)

MORTIMER (*quickly recovering his aplomb, rises, and his tone becomes evangelical*): That is an unconfirmed report from Berlin. We cannot believe the lies which come out of the Lie-factory of Hitler. (*He pauses a moment and thinks. He starts to wag his finger and continues in his evangelical tone.*) This Pact will strengthen the hand of Poland against aggression. My friends, this is the greatest blow for World Peace that has been delivered in our era. (*Very slowly and with finality.*) NOW THERE CAN BE NO WAR. (*As he is saying the above—*

Curtain

ACT THREE, Scene 2

Same as Scene 1.

Three weeks later. Late afternoon.

As the curtain rises IDA is at the radio, trying to get a station. VINCENT enters.

VINCENT: Mrs. Mowbray, there's a gentleman downstairs, a Mr. Johnson. He wants to see you.

IDA: Johnson? Did he say what he wants?

VINCENT: He says he's from the government. (*IDA looks frightened and disturbed. A slight pause.*)

IDA: Will you ask him to come up? (*VINCENT exits. IDA looks bewildered. In the few moments preceding JOHNSON's entrance, she is apparently making an effort to be calm. She stands a moment. Then she decides to sit. MR. JOHNSON enters. He stands in the doorway. IDA turns around and sees him as soon as he arrives. He is a man in his early thirties. While not conforming to the conventional conception of a government agent, he is a man of some presence. On his entry, he immediately*

takes in the room, glances all around as if to observe as much as possible in the room, and to fix it in his mind. In doing this, his eyes move very fast. He is apparently a college man.)

JOHNSON: Mrs. Mowbray?

IDA (*rising. Out of her fear she tends to be very gracious and polite*): Yes?—

JOHNSON: My name is Johnson. I'm a special agent from the Department of Justice. (*He takes out credentials in the form of a wallet, which is a little smaller than an ordinary man's wallet. He opens it and holds it out to IDA.*) Here are my credentials.

IDA (*drawing back without looking at the credentials*): Won't you sit down?

JOHNSON (*with polite insistence*): Mrs. Mowbray, you must look at my credentials. (*He walks toward her, holding his opened wallet before her.*)

IDA (*looking cursorily at the wallet, so cursorily that it is obvious she cannot really see the credentials.*): Yes—I see.

JOHNSON (*still with polite insistence*): Please take them and look at them, Mrs. Mowbray. (*IDA accepts the wallet, looks at it, and then hands the wallet back to JOHNSON.*)

IDA: What did you want to see me about? (*She motions him to a chair, and they both sit down.*)

JOHNSON: I was sent here, Mrs. Mowbray, to get some information for the Department. I don't know what it is specifically for.

IDA: Information? About what?

JOHNSON: Several matters. Now, this Mr. Mortimer. You know him quite well?

IDA: Well, I wouldn't say I knew him intimately. Yes, I know Mr. Mortimer.

JOHNSON: Did you ever visit him at his home?

IDA: No. I never visited him.

JOHNSON: Did you ever meet any friends of his?

IDA: Oh, I dare say.

JOHNSON: Now, Mrs. Mowbray, did he ever bring anyone with him to your house?

IDA: Mr. Mowbray and I do a great deal of entertaining. We meet all sorts of people, writers, actresses, lawyers, lecturers, journalists, oh, all sorts of people.

JOHNSON (*politely interrupting her*): Do you recall whether or not Mr. Mortimer ever brought a Miss Lucy M. Smith to your home? Or did you ever meet a woman of that name with him elsewhere?

IDA (*controlling her fright by speaking very slowly, distinctly, and sweetly*): I do not recall ever meeting any such person.

JOHNSON: Do you remember meeting a Mr. Fyodor Stykehvitch with Mr. Mortimer?

IDA: No, I can't say I have.

JOHNSON: Do you remember ever meeting a rather well-built Russian with a slight beard—a man with one glass eye, who spoke in a very low-pitched and cultivated voice and always kept one hand in his pocket?

IDA (*looking very upset*): I don't identify any such person from your description.

JOHNSON (*perceiving that she is worried*): Now, Mrs. Mowbray, there's nothing for you to be upset about. I just have to ask you these questions because we're seeking information.

IDA: I'm not upset. But naturally I don't like being cross-examined. You must know, Mr. Johnson, my life is an open book. My husband is a lawyer of very fine repute, my youngest daughter is a graduate student just getting her Ph.D., and we have very many friends in the Government in Washington.

JOHNSON (*interrupting her*): I'm sure of that, Mrs. Mowbray. I'm really not trying to cross-examine you. But you'll understand I'm acting under orders to get certain information.

IDA (*very sweetly*): I understand, Mr. Johnson.

JOHNSON: You're an officer of the Anti-Fascist Committee for Peace and Progress, aren't you, Mrs. Mowbray?

IDA: You must understand, Mr. Johnson, a great number of people say that we're a Communist organization. But I happen to know that the overwhelming majority of its members are

honest and sincere liberals who have no interest in Communism as such.

JOHNSON (*interrupting*): I know a great deal about your Committee, and I understand that a great many people think it does fine work—but what I want to know is whether or not a woman named Miss Lucy Martha Smith ever worked for it or had anything to do with it?

IDA: Why, not to my knowledge. Of course, we have so many members I can't possibly know them all.

JOHNSON (*taking an envelope out of his pocket, speaking as he does so*): In an arrest we've made, we found this envelope addressed to Miss L. M. Smith, care of you, Mrs. Mowbray. (*He shows IDA the envelope.*)

IDA (*becoming ostentatiously calm*): Oh, that! I hadn't connected what you were saying. Yes, I've been receiving mail for a German refugee—I was doing this as a favor for a friend of mine—this refugee had difficulty in getting mail from her family in Germany.

JOHNSON (*looking at envelope*): But this letter is post-marked Baltimore. By the way, have you relatives in Baltimore?

IDA (*taken aback*): Yes.

JOHNSON: Have you seen them recently?

IDA: It's well over a year since I've seen any of them.

JOHNSON: Now—how many letters were there in the name of L. M. Smith that you received?

IDA (*thinking*): Oh—I'd say five or six.

JOHNSON: Were any of them registered?

IDA (*emphatic*): No. They just came ordinary mail.

JOHNSON: Was one of them from the State Department?

IDA: But, Mr. Johnson, I really never looked.

JOHNSON: Do you always get all the mail the first thing in the morning before everyone is up?

IDA: No, I can't say that I do. Usually one of the servants brings the mail to me.

JOHNSON (*producing a photostat of a receipt for registered*

mail. He walks over to her with it and holds it before her): Is that your signature, Mrs. Mowbray?

IDA (*looking at photostat and then straight up at JOHNSON's face, says very emphatically*): No!

JOHNSON: Now, Mrs. Mowbray, I'm going to ask you—this is for your protection also—to write out the name of Lucy Martha Smith for me. (*IDA immediately goes to the desk and writes out signature on a piece of paper and brings it to him. JOHNSON examines her signature while she also examines the photostat.*)

IDA: Just what is this, Mr. Johnson?

JOHNSON: That is a photostat of the receipt. Someone in your house must have signed the receipt for a passport on the fifteenth of May.

IDA: Are you certain?

JOHNSON: Absolutely certain. This is a photostat of the receipt given to the mailman. There can be no mistake about that. (*IDA stands shocked and speechless as he looks at IDA's handwriting, comparing it.*) But, Mrs. Mowbray, this is obviously not your signature. There is no reason for you to be too greatly disturbed. However, I am going to keep it and show it to my chief. I have to do this, you understand.

IDA (*quite taken aback*): I—I really don't know what to say. . . .

JOHNSON: Now, who could have signed the name of Lucy Martha Smith, Mrs. Mowbray, in your household?

IDA: Why, I have no idea.

JOHNSON: Well, some woman in this house signed the receipt. Now, what other persons are there in your household?

IDA: There's the cook, Nellie, and the maid, Louise. That's all.

JOHNSON: Anyone else who could have conceivably signed it?

IDA: I don't think so.

JOHNSON: Are you sure? Have you had friends who might have spent the night here?

IDA: The only outside guest has been a journalist, Sanford Warren.

JOHNSON: No, it couldn't have been he. Then—there is no one else.

IDA: My husband never could have signed it. He's a reactionary—I mean he's an isolationist.

JOHNSON: You haven't overlooked anyone in the household, Mrs. Mowbray?

IDA: Well—there're my two daughters, Barbara and Pauline—but I know they couldn't have possibly signed that receipt. That's out of the question. Oh—I almost forgot—I did have a secretary—she sometimes did receive mail for me—

JOHNSON: Miriam Strasser is her name?

IDA: Yes, that's the name. (*IDA is surprised at the information he seems to possess.*)

JOHNSON: Do you know where she lives?

IDA: No, I can't say I do. She hasn't been my secretary for some time—not since I broke with the Committee.

JOHNSON: You say you broke with the Anti-Fascist Committee for Peace and Progress?

IDA: Well, you see my main interest was fighting Hitler and boycotting Germany. And shortly after the announcement of the Russo-Hitler *rapprochement*—I discovered—well—they somehow changed their attitude—so to speak—I delivered a statement before the executive board and was promptly overruled. It was really a dreadful experience for me, Mr. Johnson. And then, shortly afterward, before I was able to press the issue with them—they disbanded. The Committee no longer exists.

JOHNSON (*taking a memorandum book and jotting down something in it*): Now, one more question, Mrs. Mowbray, and I think I won't have to trouble you any more just now. Have you any way of getting in touch with Miriam Strasser?

IDA: I'm afraid not. My relationship with her was purely professional and I have not the slightest idea where she might be.

JOHNSON: Thank you very much, Mrs. Mowbray, and I trust I have not inconvenienced you too much.

IDA (*trying to conceal her fear*): Mr. Johnson—there is no fear of any publicity concerning this unfortunate episode?

JOHNSON: I can't very well guarantee that there will be none—but I hope not, Mrs. Mowbray. (*He rises to leave.*) Thank you very much.

IDA: You're very welcome, Mr. Johnson. (JOHNSON *exits*. IDA *slowly moves away from where she has been standing. She walks like one in a daze and suddenly gives way to a gesture of fright as she moves her hand over her brow. ALEC enters with a newspaper. She jumps before she realizes it is her husband. She turns and looks at him as though waiting for a question to be asked her.*)

ALEC (*moving to take a chair*): Hello, Ida.

IDA (*becoming very sweet and solicitous*): Hello, dear.

ALEC (*proceeding to look at newspaper*): Well, I was just reading about your friend Mortimer in the evening paper.

IDA: Yes?

ALEC: Mortimer's been arrested. You know it's funny. Even though I know him—I've seen him often enough, God knows—it came as a shock.

IDA (*with concealed excitement*): What was he arrested for, Alec?

ALEC (*his eyes still on the paper*): It's all very mysterious. I can't make head or tail of the story—some passport fraud.

IDA (*trying to hide her alarm*): Does it mention Mortimer's connection with the Committee?

ALEC: It says he was very active working among the well-to-do fellow travelers. (*He looks up, alarmed.*) God! I hope that it doesn't get into the paper that he was always coming to our house. That would be fine for me, wouldn't it?

IDA: I don't see how we could be involved, Alec.

ALEC: I hope not—Well, I'm glad that you've broken with all that. (IDA *starts to walk up and down the room a few paces.*)

IDA: Mortimer knew hundreds of people. There's no reason why we should be mentioned.

ALEC (*starting to read the paper. He suddenly looks up*): Say—who was that young man I ran into as I was entering the house?

IDA: Oh, someone—some carpet agent. He was told by someone I was interested in buying some carpet. As a matter of fact, we could stand to have the stairs recarpeted.

ALEC: Well, that's your department, Ida.

IDA: Yes—I might get them recarpeted in a deep maroon.

ALEC (*looking back at his newspaper*): Would you like me to read you this Mortimer story?

IDA: No. Please don't, Alec. And will you do me a favor? The children will be here any moment—and I hope you'll keep the conversation clear of politics. I feel as though I've had a tremendous experience—and I'm perfectly willing to recognize how mistaken I was—in *certain people*—and yet I'm not *quite* ready to be ragged about it all. (VINCENT *comes in with a tray with cocktail shaker, glasses, and canapés.*)

ALEC: Now—you know I'm not going to do that. (*He is still absorbed in his newspaper.*) Say—this is going to be something. This looks like hot stuff.

IDA: The children will be here any moment, Alec—and I just want to say a word or two before they come. (ALEC *looks up.*) You don't think we've laid too much emphasis on the reconciliation between Barbara and Eric? I feel everything is pretty much blown over, don't you?

ALEC: When Warren left town and she couldn't reach him—she came to her senses.

IDA: I was just wondering. I heard them quarreling this morning.

ALEC: For God's sake. You expect them to stop quarreling?

IDA: I suppose I'm just too concerned. (*Her tone changes to one of great meekness.*) I telephoned Pauline—I forgot to tell you—and asked her and Phillip to come to dinner tonight.

ALEC (*his face lighting up; he is very elated*): You did? Well, I'm very glad. What time?

IDA: They ought to be here any minute. (ALEC puts his paper down and just stares at IDA. IDA is embarrassed and goes to her desk. ALEC watches her.)

IDA (as she fumbles with some papers): You know who else I telephoned today? He wasn't in but I left word for him to call me back.

ALEC: Who?

IDA: Sascha.

ALEC (very pleased): I always liked Sascha.

IDA (returning to her chair): I'm not feeling very well. Oh, I suppose I'm just tired—worn out—I was thinking—perhaps a little trip—

ALEC: Why don't you take a little trip? It'll do you good. (ERIC and BARBARA enter.)

ERIC: Let's turn the radio on. There's a broadcast due from London, Paris, Berlin, and Warsaw.

BARBARA: Oh, please, Eric. I just can't stand another radio broadcast.

ERIC: Barbara, there's a war on. Civilization is involved! I want to know what's going on. (He starts to turn the radio dial.)

BARBARA: Well, there isn't news coming out of Europe ten times a day.

IDA: Please, Eric, I'm not feeling very well. I'm going to ask you not to turn the radio on. (ERIC shuts off radio.)

ALEC: Eric, instead of getting us in touch with the world, why don't you go over there and shake that cocktail shaker?

BARBARA (while ERIC goes to table and shakes cocktail shaker): What's the matter, Mother?

IDA: Oh, nothing much. I'm just exhausted. (PAULINE and PHILLIP enter. Their mood is cordial but reticent.)

PAULINE: Hello, Mother. (There is an estranged feeling.)

ALEC: Hello, Phillip.

PHILLIP: Hello. (Cordial but slightly aloof.) How do you do, Mrs. Mowbray?

IDA (shyly but very cordially): How do you do, I'm glad

to see you. (PHILLIP and IDA shake hands. PAULINE goes to ALEC and kisses him.)

PAULINE: Hello, Eric. Hello, Barbara. (ERIC and BARBARA ad lib hello to PAULINE. Then they ad lib hello to PHILLIP, and he returns the greeting. ERIC goes around with tray with cocktails. They all take one. IDA takes a plate of canapés and passes it around. The conversation that follows goes on while ERIC and IDA are doing this.)

ALEC: What do you think about World War Number Two to end all wars, Phillip?

PHILLIP: No matter what anybody does now, it looks bad. No matter what happens, it's bad.

ALEC: Ida, here, you know, said that I was responsible for Munich, but that isn't true, because Chamberlain never consulted me about it.

IDA: I hope we're not going to discuss the world situation. It's so complicated that none of us knows anything about it. (She stops before PHILLIP with the canapés.) I'm really not feeling very well. While I do want to discuss our recent differences, I'm just not up to it tonight.

PHILLIP: Oh, we don't have to discuss that now. I think I understand.

BARBARA: Pauline, how do you like your new place?

PAULINE: It's going to be wonderful when I get it all fixed up.

IDA: Pauline, you tell me just what specially you would like me to get you. I'd much rather you'd tell me than for me to get you something you mightn't want.

ERIC: I suppose I'll never be able to see Europe now.

BARBARA: I wonder how everything is going to affect the theater. I just have to have a season. Oh, Eric, if you were only a playwright instead of a novelist.

PAULINE: Mother, we could stand a good reading lamp, but not one of those floor lamps. What I really want is a little bridge lamp.

IDA: I'll let you pick it out. We'll go together, and you can pick it out.

ALEC: My client, Thorne, was in to see me today. He's already cleaned up on the market in war babies, and he was in a dither because he heard a rumor that there might be peace.

PAULINE: Father, I'm sure now that I'll have my doctor's thesis written before the end of the year.

IDA: Phillip, I think it's a very nice apartment you both found, so light and airy. It ought to be very quiet for you when you study.

PAULINE: You know, I walked all over town, north, south, east, and west, before I found anything I'd even show to Phillip. I didn't want to bother him. When I found this apartment and asked him to come up and take a look at it—mind you, I'd worn myself to a frazzle—he said: "Well, that was simple, we didn't have to look far."

IDA: The same thing happened to me with your father, Pauline.

ALEC: You know, that reminds me. When Ida and I were coming back from our honeymoon, our train went around a sharp curve. A hat box fell down on top of Ida. She turned to me and said rather sharply: "Alec, what did you do?" (*The children all laugh.*)

IDA: That isn't true, Alec.

ERIC: I wonder, if this country goes to war, whether or not I'll be drafted.

BARBARA: Eric, you know you wouldn't know how to shoot a gun. You never could be taught. Why, I wouldn't let you be a soldier, because when you would try to shoot the enemy, I know there'd be an accident and you'd shoot yourself.

ERIC: Barbara, you always talk as if I were an incompetent. (*He goes around and fills up the cocktail glasses.*)

ALEC: Eric, as an old married man, I can assure you that all wives talk as if their husbands were ridiculous.

PAULINE: I don't talk that way about Phillip.

ALEC: Well, you will. (*The telephone rings. ERIC goes to answer it.*)

ERIC: Hello. . . . Who's calling? . . . Who? . . . Just a

minute. (ERIC looks puzzled. He turns to IDA.) It's for you, Ida. I didn't get the name—it's a foreign accent.

IDA (frightened): Is it a man or a woman?

ERIC: It's a man's voice. (IDA very calmly and collectedly goes to telephone.)

IDA: Hello? . . . Yes? . . . I didn't get the name— Oh, Sascha! (With great relief.) Oh, yes, I called you earlier in the day— How have you been, Sascha? . . . Oh, I'm not feeling very well. I've had a great deal of upset in my life. I'll tell you about it when I see you. How's your work coming? . . . Oh, marvelous! . . . I'm so glad to hear that—I feel terrible about my neglect of you, Sascha, but I'll explain it all when I see you, and I think you'll understand. . . . Well, you'll tell me all about yourself, too. Could you come here for lunch tomorrow? . . . Well, then the day after tomorrow—at one—I won't have anyone here. We'll be alone—I'm awfully glad to hear the good news. All right, until Thursday. Good-by, Sascha, good-by. (She turns from phone triumphantly.) Sascha has written a new symphony!

ALEC: I'm glad to hear it.

IDA: The greatest mistake I ever made was in neglecting Sascha.

ALEC: I think so, Ida. You know I've been thinking about your recent activities and all your well-meaning efforts. But, Ida, you and I can't change the world. The world is in a hell of a shape, I know that. But I don't know what you and I can do about it. We're just not the people to do it. Maybe Phillip might help do something someday, I don't know. But you and I can't. (VINCENT stands in doorway.)

VINCENT: Dinner is served.

Curtain

